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PREFACE.

THE principal design of this work is to give prominence to the great event of time,—the birth of the Saviour of the world.

This event is linked in with the most popular portion of Roman history,—that of which the principal facts are best known, with which the popular mind is most familiar. The period immediately preceding the birth of Christ, the time when it took place, and that which followed it, are therefore the most interesting to the general reader, and the most readily recalled. Among classical readers, the age of Terence and of Cicero, of Virgil and of Horace, of Sallust and of Livy, the age designated, in its more comprehensive form, as the Augustan age, is viewed with the most lively regard; and this the age that witnessed the birth of Christ. To the English reader, the bard of Avon has rendered the names of many of the chief actors who figured about that time familiar as household words. Under his magic pen, Julius Cæsar and Pompey, Brutus and Cassius, Antony and Cleopatra, start as it were to life. These are some of the distinguished names associated with the circumstances that prepared the way for the birth of Christ and the fulfilment of Scripture. As for Julius Cæsar, India was indebted to him for its *third* restoration, the re-

building of its walls, and its independent kingly authority when Christ was born.*

To concentrate these personages, the current events of that period, the literature of the age, around the birth of Christ, is one of the designs of the author.

Another object that the writer has in view, is to show the preparation the witnesses to the birth of Christ passed through in order duly to testify to it. He supposes they were all for a series of years in a process of training or preparation, under the teaching and guidance of the Holy Spirit and the providence of God. As for Anna, we know that she commenced to watch and pray for the redemption of Israel eighty-four years before the time; and of Simeon we are told that the Holy Ghost had presignified to him that he should not die till he had seen the Lord's Christ. This premonition was given, as we infer, some time (perhaps a considerable length of time) before Christ's birth; and, by parity of reasoning, the same may be predicated of the other witnesses, the shepherds and the Magi.

In carrying out our plan, therefore, we step behind the scenes, and seek to show how, when the curtain arose, the actors were prepared understandingly to perform their several parts. Not altogether by surprise were the shepherds taken; not wholly unprepared were they for the message and song of the angels. As in the performance of a play, the parts were well studied; the actors were thoroughly trained beforehand; and thus were ushered in, so naturally and easily, the

* See Book IV., chap. i. p. 77, of this work.

opening scenes of man's redemption and the world's restoration.

As a thread on which to hang all the rest, the history of Herod is introduced. Herod was to Jerusalem and Judea what Cæsar Augustus was to Rome and Italy. As Augustus adorned Rome, so Herod adorned Jerusalem; and as Augustus, after the death of Mark Antony, restored order, peace, and prosperity to Italy, so Herod, after the devastations occasioned partly by divisions among the Jews themselves, partly by the evils of the Roman civil wars, raised Judea to a high degree of temporal prosperity, and prepared the way for that interval of calm and peace which the land enjoyed at the time of the birth of Christ, and, for the most part, for many years afterward.

The reader will thus see that the writer carries three threads in his hand. One connects itself with the current events of the period of which he writes, the Roman history of that time; the other, with the history of Herod; and the other, with the real or supposed antecedent history of the witnesses to the birth of Christ. It must be admitted that the task has not been an easy one; while his threefold division, by dividing the attention of the reader, must almost unavoidably weaken the interest of the story. His plan, however, would not admit of a more concentrated narrative; and the importance of his design will, he hopes, in some measure compensate for any deficiency in this respect.

To give interest to the birth of Christ, he freely acknowledges to have been, from first to last, his chief design. The history of Herod has been selected principally as it refers to this. What event is of magnitude equal to this? On what do

the hopes of man depend, if not on this? What expectation of any bright future to our world can we form, if it be not through the Day-Spring that has visited us from on high? Angels have magnified this event; should not men? If wars are to cease to the end of the earth, and good will among men universally to prevail,—if God is about to “call the earth from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof,”—it must be by the cordial reception (even as the shepherds themselves received it) of the announcement of the angels to the shepherds on the plains of Bethlehem:—“Unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.”

That this work, most humble in its pretensions, but great in its subject, may be made subsidiary in some degree to this happy result, is the desire and prayer of the writer.

BURLINGTON, N. J., Jan. 1860.

CONTENTS.

BOOK FIRST.

THE MONUMENT.

	PAGE
PROEM.....	7
CHAP. I.—The Prediction.....	11
II.—The Night-Flight.....	16
III.—The Boy-King Herod in Petra—The City of Edom, or Esau.....	23

BOOK SECOND.

THE MITHRIDATIC WAR.

PROEM.....	30
CHAP. I.—Pompey in Judea.....	32
II.—A Chamber in the Temple.....	38
III.—The Son of Hillel.....	44

BOOK THIRD.

THE MAMERTINE PRISON IN ROME.

PROEM	49
CHAP. I.—The Palace of the Maccabees.....	51
II.—Six Years of the Life of Herod after the Return from Petra, the City of Edom, or Esau.....	59
III.—Marriage of Alexandra, Daughter of Hyrcanus.....	63

BOOK FOURTH.

A RETROSPECTIVE GLANCE.

	PAGE
PROEM	68
CHAP. I.—The Rebuilding of the Walls of Jerusalem, B. c. 47.....	75
II.—Herod Governor of Galilee	79
III.—The Descendants of Zerubbabel.....	87

BOOK FIFTH.

CASSIUS IN JUDEA.

PROEM.....	95
CHAP. I.—The Death of Antipater, Father of Herod the Great....	99
II.—Herod crowned King of Judea at Rome, in the year B. c. 37.....	104
III.—Shepherd-Life in Judea.....	111

BOOK SIXTH.

ANTONY THE TRIUMVIR IN THE EAST.

PROEM.....	117
CHAP. I.—Herod King in Jerusalem.....	120
II.—Herod and Menahem.....	124
III.—Herod and his Family.....	131
IV.—Herod and the Sanhedrin.....	142
V.—Ananelus made High-Priest.	148
VI.—The Hill-Country of Judea.....	163

BOOK SEVENTH.

ANTONY AND THE PARTHIANS.

PROEM.....	169
CHAP. I.—Herod summoned to Laodicea by Antony to answer for the murder of Aristobulus.....	173
II.—Cleopatra in Jerusalem.....	181
III.—Herod prepares to join Antony against Octavius Cæsar.	185
IV.—The Sect of the Magi.....	194

BOOK EIGHTH.

BATTLE OF ACTIUM.

	PAGE
PROEM.....	199
CHAP. I.—The Return of the Aged King Hyrcanus from Babylonia, and his Death.....	207
II.—Herod's Interview with Octavius Cæsar in the Island of Rhodes.....	211
III.—Anna again.....	220

BOOK NINTH.

DEATH OF ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA.

PROEM.....	225
CHAP. I.—The Crisis, or Turning-Point, in Herod's Life.....	230
II.—The Theatre in Jerusalem.....	234
III.—Simeon.....	245

BOOK TENTH.

OCTAVIUS CÆSAR, SURNAMED AUGUSTUS BY THE ROMAN
SENATE.

PROEM.....	253
CHAP. I.—The Conspiracy of the Ten.....	260
II.—Herod rebuilds Samaria.....	264
III.—Herod builds Cæsarea.....	269
IV.—Daniel's Seventy Weeks.....	276

BOOK ELEVENTH.

THE AUGUSTAN AGE.

PROEM.....	284
CHAP. I.—Agrippa's Visit to Jerusalem.....	290
II.—Alexander and Aristobulus, Sons of Mariamne.....	294
III.—Celebration of Games at Cæsarea.....	311
IV.—The Universal Expectation.....	319

BOOK TWELFTH.

DECREE OF CÆSAR AUGUSTUS.

	PAGE
PROEM.....	329
CHAP. I.—The Appearance of the Angel to Zacharias in the Temple.....	342
II.—Antipater conspires against his Father.....	352
III.—The Appearance of the Angel to Mary.....	355
IV.—Visit of Mary to her Cousin Elizabeth.....	361
V.—The Angel of the Lord appears to Joseph in a Dream..	365
VI.—The Nativity.....	368
VII.—The Visit of the Magi.....	374
VIII.—The Death of Herod.....	382
IX.—The Holy Family in Egypt.....	383

Book First.

THE MONUMENT.

PROEM.

FOR many generations there stood on a hill (on which also was built the city of Modin, the location of which is now unknown) on the shore of the Mediterranean Sea, a lofty and splendid pile, which long served as a sea-signal to the voyager as he approached the coast of Palestine. Far off upon the sea it might have been seen, with the long chain of Lebanon to the north, Mount Ephraim to the east, and the mountains of Judæa on the south, lining the distant horizon. Not far, probably, from the base of the hill on which the pile stood, the waters of the Mediterranean washed the shore, and the sound of the waves fell as music on the ear.

The pile consisted of a white marble monument, highly polished, adorned with sculpture, and of a great height, with seven pyramids in juxtaposition to the monument, with a peristyle, or a circular row of pillars, surrounding the whole. The pillars, which were composed each of a single block of white marble, were cut with armour and ships, the armour a fac-simile of that worn by the Maccabees. There was also possibly carved thereon the sword of Apollonius, who was slain by the hand of Judas Maccabæus in his first battle, and used by him ever afterward. The carved work on

the tall pillars was on a scale of such magnitude that it could be seen at a considerable distance from the sea. The whole structure was remarkable not only for its size but its beauty, and partook somewhat of the grace and elegance of Grecian architecture.

This monumental pile marked the last resting-spot of the liberators of the Jewish nation from the thralldom of the Greek-Macedonian empire of the Seleucidæ.* Here—their battles over, their country free, and their ancient constitution restored—they rested in peace.

The one who reared with great care and great cost this monument to their memory was Simon, the second son of the aged and valorous Mattathias, and who survived them all. When he became in his turn, by the universal consent of his nation, their ruler, and Judea once more stood erect among the surrounding nations as an independent kingdom, Simon built this mausoleum over the spot where reposed the remains of his father and mother and his four brothers, John, Judas, Eleazar, and Jonathan. Of the seven pyramids, six were erected, one over against the other, in memory of those already dead; the seventh was reserved for himself.

This monument of which we have spoken still stood in the time of Josephus, who saw it and has left the description of it; and Eusebius also speaks of it, as we are informed, as existing in his time, which was two hundred years later. Gradually, however, along with other monuments of past ages, it crumbled into dust; and now not a stone of it is left to mark where

* So called from *Seleucus Nicator*, the founder of the Greek-Syrian empire.

it stood: every trace or vestige of it is gone. But while it remained it set forth the prowess of Judæa's sons and commemorated the freedom of the nation. The voyager on the Syrian coast, whoever he might be, —whether the dweller on the Ionian Sea, or the Greek from the isles of the Ægean, or the Lacedemonian of the same origin as the Jews, (as acknowledged by the Lacedemonians themselves,) or the Asiatic from the Hellespont,—could not fail to be reminded of deeds which, when we consider the small force of the Jews in comparison with that which the Greek-Macedonian kings of Syria brought against them, together with the result, will not yield in illustriousness to any other. The repeated triumphs of Judas Maccabæus, and his brothers Jonathan and Simon, over the Syrians, thus chronicled, were carried in every direction: they reached Rome itself, then fast arising into great power; and the proud republic was not ashamed to receive Judæa into the number of its friends and allies. Tablets of brass hung in the temple of Jupiter at Rome on the Capitoline Hill, and tablets of brass suspended in the outer court of the temple at Jerusalem, contained the record of the various alliances of the Jews and the Romans. The patriotism and valor commemorated by these tablets, though the tablets themselves have long since perished, live yet in the hearts of this people; and the day will come when, no doubt, this wonderful nation will be restored to its own land and take the first place among the nations of the earth,—will receive the homage not of one nation, but of many, and will yet bless, according to the promise made to Abraham, all the families of our world.

HEROD THE GREAT.

Book First.

CHAPTER I.

THE PREDICTION.

ONCE upon a time a boy was wending his way to school through the streets of Jerusalem. He was a boy of bright parts, and, though but eight summers had passed over his head, he had already a very determinate and resolute bearing. His physiognomy was not altogether Jewish: it had a certain tincture about it that savoured at no very remote date of a foreign stock; yet on the whole, from the cast of the face, one would be ready to infer that the lad partook of Jewish blood and had been grafted into their vine. He was the son of one of the wealthiest families, if not the wealthiest family, of Jerusalem. In the splendid palace-mansion of his father, located probably in the upper city, as that part denominated Zion's Hill was called, (for in that quarter rose the mansions of the wealthy and of the princes of the people,) his eyes first saw the light. The city of Jerusalem was his native city: here he was born; here he first awoke to consciousness and to life. The objects

with which he was first familiar were those which belonged to the City of David; his earliest associations were connected with Zion,—her temple and ritual, her walls and her bulwarks.

There lived at this time in the city of Jerusalem a very eminent Jewish teacher. His name was Menahem. He was of the sect of the Essenes,—a sect remarkable for the simplicity of their manners and the innocence of their lives. For silence they were as remarkable as the disciples of the Greek philosopher Pythagoras. They would not speak at all till after the sun arose, but addressed themselves in entire silence and stillness to God. They had a great reverence for the name of God. They lived together, for the most part, in small communities in the towns and villages of Judea; and when they met to partake of food at a common table, the younger part of the company invariably listened with the greatest deference to the elders,—as it was among the Spartans in the days of their poverty and frugality. All they had was common to all, each man sharing in the common stock, no one calling any thing his own. Thus they passed their lives in simplicity, in labour mostly agricultural, and in sweet content and harmony. Men of great piety arose among them, some of whom were endowed with the spirit of prophecy. One of these, by name Judas, foretold the early death of Antigonus, second son of John Hyrcanus, predicting both the place and the exact time when it would occur. Another foretold the deposition and banishment of Archelaus, son of Herod the Great, or, rather, interpreted correctly a dream of Archelaus which presignified that event.

Of this sect was this Menahem of whom we are now to speak.

It is not altogether improbable he was the chief teacher of the school to which our lad of eight summers was wending his way. However, as of this we are not sure, we will not affirm the fact. But far and wide was he known throughout the city both for piety and knowledge. He held also, it is supposed, the high office of vice-president of the great Jewish national council known as the Sanhedrin. His word had great weight; and when he appeared in the streets or in his school he was revered as one who loved the law of his God and regulated his life by it.

Our boy, with a bold and free step, walked along, lost in his own thoughts. Of a sanguine turn, life already began to be gilded with bright tints, and his imagination, readily kindled, sketched on the dim outline of the future gorgeous pageants and visions which exist only in the fancy of the youthful dreamer. Of a restive nature, the yoke of a school chafed his exuberant spirit; though not wholly without ardour did he pursue his studies. The splendid imagery of the prophets, and the brilliant pictures they draw of the coming glory of his nation, fired his impressible mind. For aught we know, some thoughts of this kind may have been passing through his mind, he lost in them and walking along leisurely to school, when suddenly he was accosted thus:—“Hail, King of the Jews!”

The reverie of the lad thus suddenly broken in upon, he stopped, turned round; and there stood Menahem, his teacher, with his face so placid and benignant.

The boy Herod,—for the lad of whom we have thus

far spoken was none other,—looking up at Menahem, said, “You mistake. I am not, as you see, either Alexander or Antigonus, [the sons of Aristobulus, the then reigning king of the Jews.] but of Antipater. How came you to take me for one of the young princes?”

Upon this Menahem the Essene replied, “No: I made no mistake. On the contrary, God has sent me to announce to you that he has chosen you to fill the place of king of his people: and coming years will show that I but predict that which God has ordained.” Upon this, Menahem struck Herod with the palm of his hand upon his back between the shoulders two or three times, and bade him remember those blows when he came to the throne.

The lad, somewhat bewildered and surprised by so strange an interview in the public street, stood still and said nothing.

Menahem, too, was lost in silence for a moment or so, and then, with a sudden change of expression in his countenance, and sadness of tone, said, “Thou wilt live to ascend the throne, as I said, and thou wilt attain to great renown; but thy greatness and thy prosperity will corrupt thee. Thou wilt forget the lessons of thy infancy and the instructions of thy childhood. The pomp and glare of earth will withdraw thee from thy God, and thou wilt depart from the ways of righteousness. Happy would be thy life, and sweet and peaceful the close of thy days, if thou wouldst but follow after truth, justice, and mercy; but thou wilt not. Thy morn and noon of life, so fair and auspicious, will become clouded toward its close; and when it is too late thou wilt find that thy sins will darken about

thee as a thick cloud, and thy sun, so resplendent to the world, will set shrouded in darkness." So ended the solemn counsel and warning. Slowly and sadly Menahem walked away, while to the boy thus addressed the words fell upon his ear with no boding sound. He did not understand them. Whatever impression was made, it passed away for the present; but memory, faithful to her trust, recalled them with great power when, contrary to his expectations or the gayest fancy he ever formed, he became, as Menahem predicted, after the lapse of many years, in very deed **"King of the Jews."**

After the interview, our school-boy bent his way to school, and was soon absorbed in his usual tasks. When he came home at night, he made no allusion to the morning scene or interview with Menahem. Moreover, his father Antipater at this time was not a little abstracted from his family. He was even then at work setting in motion a chain of events—he himself little dreaming of the result and never living to see it—which would fulfil eventually the very prophecy of Menahem. But this plot in our drama will form the subject of the next chapter, and in its results will produce an entire change of scene. A new set of actors will make their appearance; and Herod, by this change, will stand among the tombs and in the ancient home of his ancestors.

CHAPTER II.

THE NIGHT-FLIGHT.

THE reader's attention is requested for a moment to a very brief survey of the history of the Maccabees, or the Asamonean family.

The father of the Maccabees—as they are called—was Mattathias, great-grandson of Asamoneus (whence the family-name) and priest of the course of Joarib. In the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, King of Syria, when this “wicked root”—as the Jewish chronicler calls him—undertook to root out from the earth the whole nation of the Jews, ordering all who did not conform to the Greek religion to be slain with fagot and sword, he, with his five gallant sons, stood up for the defence of the faith and institutions of the fathers. He unfurled his banner in the wilderness, and all who loved their country and were faithful to their God resorted to him. Their dwelling-place was for the time the dens and caves of the earth. Their songs were heard in the wilderness; and, amid destitution and the loss of all things, they kept with gladness, with the sound of the harp, the festival of Tabernacles.

The old man—the aged man, the patriarch of his native village Modin—led the van. At this time all Judea was overrun by Greek-Syrian troops; heathen altars were erected in every village, and strange incense

was burnt in the streets and at the doors of the houses. There was a sad falling away of Israel in that day. The fear of a dreadful death overcame the fortitude of most; while many, already derelict in heart, were glad to conform to the rites of a strange religion. Honors and rewards awaited the complaisant; death was the portion of all who would not recant from the faith of their fathers and eat of meat offered to idols. At this time also the temple was desolate and its marble courts vacant, save as the heathen trod them to profane them, the long aisles echoing to their solitary footsteps. So little was the temple frequented that, like a city in time of pestilence, grass grew in its courts; while none but aliens dwelt in the faithful city. The fire on the altar had been put out; no candlestick with its seven lamps lit up the holy place; even the gorgeous veil that separated the holy place from the most holy had been removed, and the two rooms of the temple were as one. Dark indeed was the cloud of desolation that hung over the land of Judah, and low were the hopes of the people.

From the top of the mountains,—skulking in the daytime, in their dens and hiding-places like wild beasts—by night, Mattathias and his sons would descend suddenly on their foes. This night it would be this village, the next that, the Maccabees with their war-cry sweeping all before them. For one year the aged Mattathias fought thus. Then he died. Judas Maccabæus, his third son, succeeded him. With but a handful of heroic followers, no army that was sent against him could withstand his valor. But his trust was not in his own arm, strong as that was: an invisible hand went be-

fore him and fought his battles for him. The pictured array of the battles of his countrymen in former ages was ever before his eyes; and he trusted in that power that made a way for the escape of Israel from the pursuing hosts of Pharaoh through the waters of the deep, deep sea. Here he stood as on a watch-tower; and, when he raised his voice in the hour of battle, it was as if the thunder shook the hills and the dark caverns within gave back the sound. Then, leaping on the enemy,—and his men, too, as if inspired with more than human strength and courage by that voice,—down went banner and banner-bearer, horse and rider. It was as if their foes were swept away as in an instant by a rushing deluge of overflowing waters. The largest and best-equipped armies that Syria could muster in turn were overthrown; till at length, after the space of some three years since the massacre of Jerusalem and the profanation of the temple by Antiochus Epiphanes, the land was free. Two years after the death of his father, Judas regained possession of Jerusalem, and consecrated that event by a new festival, the feast of the Dedication.

After the death of Judas,—who fell fighting for his country,—Jonathan, his next youngest brother, succeeded him. He acted both as High-Priest and Prince of the Jews. At his death, by the unanimous suffrage of the whole people, Simon was elected to fill the place of his brother Jonathan, and the office of Prince of the Jews was made hereditary in his family. Upon the death of Simon, John Hyrcanus, his son, took his place, and for twenty-nine years ruled with exemplary piety and wisdom. Next followed Aristobulus, the eldest son of John Hyrcanus, who after a short reign of a year died,

when his brother, Alexander Jannæus, became king. After a most turbulent reign of twenty-seven years, marked by six years of civil discord excited by the sect of the Pharisees, Alexander Jannæus died during one of his military expeditions,—(he was always at war,)—leaving the kingdom to his wife Alexandra.

The reign of Alexandra, the wife of Alexander Jannæus, brings us down very near to the point of time when this story opens. She was a woman of strong powers of mind, and during her government of nine years the nation for the most part enjoyed internal quiet, and its power was greatly respected by all the surrounding nations. She had two sons,—Hyrcanus and Aristobulus. When she died, she left the kingdom to Hyrcanus; but Aristobulus, his younger brother, raised an army, deposed Hyrcanus after he had occupied the throne but three months, and put himself in his place.

At the time this narrative opens, Aristobulus had reigned some six years, his brother the meanwhile occupying in all content a private station. Of an easy disposition, and having a small patrimony of his own, Hyrcanus cared not very much either to fill the office of High-Priest (which he had held during all his mother's reign) nor to fill the throne. His nature was sluggish; and it would seem as if he was somewhat dull of apprehension. So he lived contentedly as a private citizen, while his more ambitious brother figured on a larger stage. Aristobulus despised his brother because of his easy, indolent nature and his limited capacity, but appears not to have molested him in his retirement.

Such was the state of things at the period we have now reached; and the brief survey we have given of

the history of the Maccabees, or of the Asamonean family, we hope, will enable the reader to proceed understandingly with us from this point.

Hyrcanus had a friend and confidant, of a very different temperament from himself. This was Antipater, or Antipas, the father of the boy-king Herod. Whether there was any ground for it or not, he persuaded Hyrcanus that he was not safe as he was; that he had but two alternatives,—either to regain the throne or to lose his life; that the counsellors of his brother continually advised him to take his life. Hyrcanus, overcome by his fears, consented at last to seek aid from Aretas, King of Arabia; and, being assured by Antipater of a friendly reception from the Arabian king, he prepared secretly to fly from Jerusalem, intending soon to return and dispossess his brother of the power he had usurped. They were to flee in the secrecy and darkness of the night, Antipater having arranged every thing with the cool sagacity and clear foresightedness which he always showed in every event and circumstance of life for the contemplated flight.

A favourable opportunity was selected. By one of the gates of the city, when all was dark and still, the party, consisting of Hyrcanus, Antipater, his wife Cypros, and all his children,—Herod among the rest,—with a guard of faithful men, well armed, issued forth upon the road that led to Bethlehem. Cæphalion, the brother of Antipater, was also of the party. Once out of the city, they rode on with great speed. Soon their horses' hoofs clattered along the rocky ridge on which Bethlehem stands. Thence south to Hebron they

moved on swiftly on their night-journey, every breast anxious lest they should be pursued. From Hebron they crossed the country to the southern terminus of the Dead Sea. Here they turned into the narrow valley which, bounded by mountains on each side, lies between the Dead Sea and the Eastern (or Elanitic) Gulf of the Red Sea. Here they were safe,—at least, soon after they entered the valley, as they were within the domain of Aretas, King of Arabia. Midway in this valley, at about an equal distance from the two seas, stood the celebrated city of Petra, the capital of Aretas, King of Arabia. Once within the rich and populous valley, (now without a single inhabitant,) they travelled more leisurely. Perhaps a deputation from Aretas met them ere they reached Petra and escorted them through that overhanging ravine—then a paved road—which now forms so extraordinary an entrance into the city. As they passed along, overhead at times the sides of the ravine, extending upward several hundred feet, nearly met, darkening their path and almost shutting out the light of day. Under the paved road that their horses' feet trod upon, a covered channel hid the little stream that flowed through the centre of the city and emptied its waters by this channel into the plain that extends itself just outside of the mouth or entrance of the ravine. As they came out of the pass into the city, it opened before them its small area, in compass not over three miles, and almost entirely surrounded by mountains of rock. Here and there the mountain-sides opened and formed as it were narrow gullies (improved into streets) beyond the level area; but, tracing them, they soon abruptly terminated.

In the centre of the city, on the banks of the little stream that with its swift, clear current flowed directly through it from west to east, in the direction of the ravine, was the great public square. It stood, most likely, on both sides of the clear, little stream, and was thus cut into two equal parts. A bridge was built over the stream. Here probably, near the square and near the stream, stood the palace of Aretas; and, as it was not easy to scale the high mountains around the city, or to force the narrow pass which formed the only entrance into Petra, Aretas, as he looked around, might, in the language of the prophet, have likened his dwelling-place and his capital to a "nest set among the stars."* Aretas was a particular friend of Antipater. The father of Antipater, when he was Governor of Idumæa, in the reign of Alexander Jannæus, cultivated the friendship of the kings of Petra; and this regard had descended to the son. It was through the influence of Antipater Aretas had undertaken to restore Hyrcanus to his throne; and now on his arrival he is greeted as a guest, ally, and friend. The palace of the king is his residence. Aretas's offers of assistance were not, however, wholly disinterested. Alexander Jannæus, the father of Hyrcanus, had taken a number of cities from the King of Arabia; and these Hyrcanus, through Antipater, engaged to return when put once more in possession of his kingdom. Thus the compact was somewhat equal; and what now remained was to try the force of arms against Aristobulus,—brother about to go to war against brother. With a force of fifty thousand men

* Obadiah 4.

which Aretas meant to bring into the field, and the large party of the Jews in Jerusalem that through the secret negotiations of Antipater favoured Hyrcanus, and the numbers that were dissatisfied with the unjust and violent government of Aristobulus, the result was hardly doubtful. Meanwhile, Hyrcanus, and those with him, were perfectly safe in the city of Petra: they were also luxuriously entertained in the palace of the king.

CHAPTER III.

THE BOY-KING HEROD IN PETRA—THE CITY OF EDMO, OR ESAU.

HERE was a change of scene for the boy Herod, whose brow already coruscated with the kingly diadem, and for whom already a throne was prepared. But what was most impressive was, by this sudden change he was now in the seat of his ancestors. This was the ancient capital of Edom, or Esau, from whom Herod was descended. In ages long past this city stood, and the wealth of the East flowed to it through its seaport at the head of the Elanitic Gulf. Persia and India sent their stuffs here, and Arabia and Africa gold and incense. Petra in that far back, distant age was then the mart of the world, as Jerusalem, Tyre, and lastly Alexandria in Egypt, were afterwards. But the sword of the Lord had been bathed in the blood of Idumæa, or Edom, and

had been made fat with fatness.* Edom had stood far off from his brother Jacob in the day of his calamity; he had rejoiced in his downfall, and had joined with his enemies against him when he was carried captive into Babylon. It was a grievous offence; and grievously was it punished. During the captivity of Israel in Babylon they had been driven by the Nabathæan Arabs, one of the tribes of Ishmael, out of their ancient heritage. Forced to leave their fruitful valley, their cities, their homes, what was left of the nation† emigrated and sought another patrimony. The land of the tribe of Simeon, lying along the coast of the Mediterranean, was at this time vacant, and the hills and valleys of the tribe of Juda were silent and desolate also. Here—in the absence of the families of the tribes of Juda and Simeon (then fulfilling, with the rest of the tribes of Israel, the term of their captivity in a strange land)—they took up their new home, taking possession of the more southern part of the tribe of Juda and the whole of the sea-washed patrimony of Simeon. Here they remained—with the city of Hebron in the hill-country of Judea as their capital—till they were conquered by John Hyrcanus, nearly seventy years before the period of which we write, and were by him amalgamated with the Jews. From this day the Edomites became *one* in every respect with the Jews,—though they did not lose their distinct appellation as Edomites till about the close of the first century of the Christian era. The name of Edom or Esau then became merged in that of Jacob or Israel and the two currents, so long

* Isa. xxxiv. 6.

† Obadiah 9.

diverse, have since flowed in one and the same channel. The controversy that began in the womb of Rebekah is thus extinct,—perhaps a type of the end of all controversy in the great brotherhood of men.*

The boy-king Herod, therefore, now stood in the ancient home of his forefathers,—their home before their forcible exile and banishment. Their tombs were excavated in the sides of the mountains; but, after the lapse of so many hundred years, was he able to trace the family monuments? Nearly five hundred years had passed since their expulsion, and dreadful was the havoc that their enemies made among them. It would seem, indeed, as if that was a day of slaughter and of extermination: but a remnant of the race was left, and probably the memorials of families were swallowed up in the general wreck. But it was enough for so impressible a mind as that of this descendant of Esau—now adopted into the family and house of Jacob—that he stood on ground consecrated by the memories of his illustrious progenitors. Then the city itself was calculated to awaken all his natural impressibility. Such a city! The tide of population swelling and overflowing the narrow boundaries of the open area begirt by precipitous mountains, the sides of the mountains were excavated for dwelling-places. There they rose, tier above tier, cut out of the rock. But the vein of

* After the lapse of so many ages, the reader thus finds fulfilled the word of the Lord to Rebekah:—"Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people, and the elder shall serve the younger." Gen. xxv. 23. Esau long had the predominance, but Jacob finally and completely prevailed.

that rock was so soft, so fine, grained as if by a painter with every variegated color, that art itself could not equal it. To all these dwellings the water of the mountains was conducted by grooves or channels cut along the face of the rock, which grooves can be traced in their course to this day. Yea, even their temple (where perchance the God of the father of Esau was worshipped) was wholly cut out of the rock, and the space-way before it. Such the city, such the singular edifices, then peopled with human beings, which rose before the view of our boy as he looked and gazed upon the new and strange spectacle. Though the city of Alexandria in Egypt at this time appropriated the vast wealth that once emptied itself here as the great mart of earth, yet was it still a wealthy and populous city. The plain to the east of it, at the mouth of the ravine, was very rich and extensive. The valley to the north and south of Petra was rich also; while even the rocky hills on both sides of the valley (whence the name Arabia Petraea; that is, rocky or stony Arabia) were cultivated with such labour and skill as to make them more or less productive. The olive, that loves the rock, probably grew there; and, where the soil could not be tilled, the branching and leafy vine threw its grateful shade, or the citron and pomegranate diffused their delicate fragrance. The valley supported many cities; and we can judge of its population, with that of the capital and the adjacent mountains, by the large army Aretas was able to bring into the field.

Here, then, were cities almost as old as time itself,—cities so old that none can be found older. Here was the city and country of Job. Here was Teman, here

Uz, here Bosrah, here Naama or the pleasant district. What associations arise with these names! Is there silence now in that land,—that land once so full of people and renowned for wisdom? Do the owl and the raven contend for the possession of the ancient abodes of the Edomites? If you lift up your voice in that silent and deserted city, is no answer heard but an echo so sad, so drear, as to startle you? Are the fields of the valley all untilled? Does not the grape grow, or the olive yield its fruit? Are there no more either vineyards or olive-fields? The wells and the cisterns that watered the soil and so greatly enriched it,—are they dry or filled up? Still, voices will be heard there again. The sepulchre of Job is not known: there is no stone to record where he lies. But he will be seen there again,—seen on that spot. Yea, and many an ancient man of those early times, of whom the world was not worthy:—Aaron among the rest, whose tomb on the top of Mount Hor looks down from its lofty pedestal into the city of Petra itself. And many an Israelite besides, who with Moses and Aaron marched in other days along the base of this very mountain,—they will all rise again, and, for aught we know, visit their old haunts; for do we not read, “Saviours shall come upon mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the Lord’s”?*

Here were thoughts and memories for this boy Herod. He was not too young to be affected by them. He had great quickness of perception,—a most lively fancy. The very echoes of the mountains found an answering

* Obadiah 21.

response in his soul. He seemed to himself to hear the voices of past ages as he ascended the mountain-side to the top, or marked the circling flight of the eagle from the high battlement on which he stood. A something within spoke of everlasting ages, as he looked around from that lofty elevation and contrasted the mightiness of the works on which his eye rested, with the little, busy groups of men in the area of the city so far, far below his feet. "How small is this current"—he might have soliloquized—"that flows below me! that stream of life, seemingly how weak and insignificant, with these monuments of rocks and hills piled up around me on every side! How like an insect the busy crowds yonder flutter in the breeze for a little moment! How many generations of men pass away and mingle with the flood, while these lofty rocks, these high and everlasting mountains, remain! Yet a voice within tells me man is the more enduring of the two. Nay, our holy books teach us this; Job, my lineal ancestor, says it. How expressly does he say that man will live again,—live ever! Am I, then, to be so much affected that man passes away? Am I not, rather, to look forward to the time when, like a plant of the earth, he will revive, but, unlike a plant, to be cut down not again? This arch, this dome above my head,—who made them but the great Being who made me?" Thus may we suppose this boy-king of a quick and reflective turn of mind mused, as he stood alone on the top of Edom, or hill of Esau, to which he had ascended by steps cut into the sides of the mountain.

Two entire years the boy Herod spent in Petra. During this time he saw Aretas, King of Arabia, at the

head of fifty thousand men, with Hyrcanus and his father Antipater, march forth to replace Hyrcanus on the throne; and not long before he left Petra to return to Jerusalem, he saw Pompey with his legions defile through the narrow pass, take possession of the city, and receive the submission of Aretas.*

But, while the boy Herod remained in the seclusion of Petra, we must trace the course of events that at the end of two years restored him once more to the city of his birth and earliest years,—Jerusalem.

* On a temple, which Pompey built and dedicated to Minerva on his return to Rome after he had finished the war in the East, he stated, among other things, that he had extended the conquests of the Republic from Lake Mæotis to the Red Sea. This, of course, included the conquest of Edom. The inscription has been preserved by Pliny; while the temple itself has long ago perished.

Book Second.

THE MITHRIDATIC WAR.

PROEM.

To interweave, as foliage and fruit in a basket of silver, cotemporaneous history, especially that of the Romans with Jewish scenes, is part of our allotted task. The march of events has brought the Romans to the borders of Judea; while what was transpiring within that sacred land—the strife of the two brothers Hyrcanus and Aristobulus—was preparing the way for the admission of the Romans into it. The Mithridatic war, after the lapse of so many years, in which it had been waged with almost unvarying success by the Romans against Mithridates, the most powerful monarch of Asia of that day, had conducted the legions for the first time to this part of Asia. Never till this war had they penetrated so far to the east. The war began nearly thirty years before, at the gates of Athens, under the conduct of Sylla. This was some eight years before the death of Sylla. Lucullus afterward took the command; and not only did Mithridates flee before him, but he broke the power of Tigranes, son-in-law of Mithridates, and King of Armenia, then a powerful nation. Lucullus was superseded by Pompey, who brought the war to a close. Some two years, however, before it was brought to a close by the death of Mithridates, Pompey,

having driven that king out of Pontus, his native kingdom, compelled him to take refuge in one of his most remote provinces or dependencies, on the Cimmerian Bosphorus. Here, near the mouth of this strait, which connects Lake Mæotis with the Euxine,* in a section of the large and fertile peninsula known then as Chersonesus Taurica,† Pompey had left Mithridates hemmed in as a lion in his lair. His ships on the Propontis and on the Euxine Sea guarded against escape in that direction; his land-forces—victorious over the Albanians and Iberians, and holding the country between the Caspian and the Euxine—prevented escape in that direction. The interminable plains of Scythia lay to the north. Mithridates driven into a corner from whence escape was hopeless, and the war thus virtually terminated, Pompey, desirous of extending his name and conquests to the Red Sea, sent first part of his army into Syria, under Scaurus and Gabinius, to take possession of that country, and soon after followed himself. At the period, then, we have now reached in our history, the Roman legions and eagles stood on the borders of the sacred land, and the iron hoof of the Republic had seemingly but to descend, to trample alike both Judea and Syria, at one and the same time, into the dust.

We may here add, by way of additional explanation to the reader, that Aristobulus, having been defeated by Aretas and Hyrcanus, was forced to retreat into the temple, while Hyrcanus took possession of the city. But, Aristobulus having subsidized Scaurus and Gabinius, they interfered and compelled Aretas, with his

* Now the Black Sea.

† The Crimea.

army, to retire. On their retreat, Aristobulus, aided by the terror of the Roman name, sallied forth, attacked the Arabians, and defeated them. In this battle, Cæphalion, brother of Antipater, was slain. In this emergency, Hyrcanus, by the advice of Antipater, appealed to Pompey; and thus the Romans became inextricably intermingled with Judea and its fate.

CHAPTER I.

POMPEY IN JUDEA.

As often as the war-cloud had gathered over that far-famed city, Jerusalem,—the ancient Salem, the city of the righteous King,—as often as the storm had risen portentous on this high hill-top, the scene of such memories in the past,—never before did so dark a cloud brood over it as now. Here was brother arrayed against brother, Jew against Jew, scholar against master, the city against the temple, the temple against the city; all was discord where there should have been peace, all fury where love should have prevailed and hushed each jarring sound. This was the city of peace. The clangor of arms was never meant for this city: the voice of contention should never have been heard in it. But what hear we but the voice of tumult? “I am for Hyrcanus,” says one. “I for Aristobulus,” says another. “Note,” says this one, “the softness, the luxuriousness, of Aristobulus.” “Mark,” says that one, “the inertness, the dulness, of Hyrcanus.” “But,” here interposes another, “if

Hyrcanus be dull, he is just. He never swells his coffers with the riches of weak, unoffending neighbours." "What!" says a partisan of Aristobulus, "shall we sit inactive, and not gorge ourselves with the spoils of the weak, like any other nation? Aristobulus, like his father, is for war, action, and the aggrandizement of the nation."

But hardly has the war begun when a new personage, whose voice was at this time more potent than that of any other living man, appeared and stilled the rising tumult. This was no less a person than Pompey the Great.

When Pompey first made his appearance on the little stage of Judea, he had hardly exhaled the dew of his youth: the glitter, the freshness almost, of life's morning was yet upon him. He was but forty-one years of age. He had been already once Consul, though he had not even as yet attained the age prescribed by the constitution. Twice had he triumphed,—once for Africa, once for Spain, and both times (which was a most extraordinary circumstance) before he was either Prætor or Consul. When he was first seen from the towers and walls of Jerusalem, with his light-armed and heavy-armed troops winding round the base of Olivet, (having left Jericho early that morning,) the descending sun reflected from the golden-tipped eagle standards in all the lengthened array and order of their usual march, as Jupiter holds the thunderbolt ready to launch it forth, so Pompey at this time held in his single hand nearly the whole power of the Roman Republic. As admiral, he had command of the sea; as general, he had control of all the provinces: without the name, he was in

reality Dictator. He stood at the head of the Commonwealth.

Alas for Jerusalem! Before Pompey lost sight of the city, he had destroyed its walls and levelled its towers with the dust. When it was thought the war between the brothers was over, when, after long delay and parley, Aristobulus had submitted, and Pompey was on the eve of taking peaceable possession of the city, the priests, who were of the party of Aristobulus, with a large body of zealous partisans, (even after Aristobulus had left the city for the camp of Pompey,) seized the temple, cut down the bridges which connected it with the city, and bade defiance to Pompey and his whole army. For three months this body of men defended the temple against every assault, till at length one of the towers on the north wall, over against the palace, having given way, brought part of the wall with it. Faustus, son of Sylla, first leaped into the open breach, followed by his company; others, following, poured like a torrent through the breach, and the city was taken. Nearly if not quite all the defenders of the temple—priests and people—perished in the deadly assault. Pompey took advantage of this so unexpected opposition (despite ancient alliances) to treat the city with great rigour,—to demolish its walls, to impose a heavy tribute on the whole land, and to put it in a state of vassalage to Rome, from which even during the reign of Herod the Great it could hardly be said to have been wholly free. As to Aristobulus, the opposition of his party (innocent as he was of any concurrence in it) served Pompey for a pretence to carry him along with him to Rome as one of his captives. Hyrcanus he left

to preside over the wreck of the fallen city, under the name, not of king, but of prince, or ruler; having, however, first greatly circumscribed the power and limits of the nation.

While the white marble pavements of the courts yet ran red with blood,—while the priests, all gory, lay dead at the foot of the altar, (perishing in the act of calmly performing religious rites,)—over the bodies of the dead, amid the moans of the dying, the smoke of smouldering porticoes, and the flames of burning buildings, Pompey made his way straight into the temple of the Jews. With his chief officers, Gabinus, Scaurus, Faustus, (at that time affianced to his daughter,) and others, he resolved to pass the sacred barriers of the temple and to explore its secret recesses. Great was the consternation of the Jews when once made aware of this resolve. They regarded it as the most impious of acts. The irreverence it betokened filled them with a holy horror. They asked themselves, “How dare any man, unbidden, thrust himself thus into the presence-chamber of the most high God?” Their conceptions of God were of such a transcendently glorious character—they had such a perception of his spotless, infinite purity and holiness—they could hardly conceive of the hardihood, the sacrilegiousness, of such an act. The whole city was covered with gloom as the announcement spread. The sack of the temple, the blood spilled in its courts, was of little account with the profanation of the temple itself. Pompey—a man of war from his youth, taking the sword when but seventeen years of age, under his father, Strabo, nurtured during the civil wars of Marius and Sylla, a partisan of Sylla, with little sentiment of

true piety in his heart—thought lightly enough of the remonstrances of the Jews. He scarce gave them a thought, but went disregardfully, if not proudly and contemptuously, up the steps which led from the inner court, not far from the great altar, to the porch of the temple. On the platform of that magnificent porch or vestibule he and his retinue stood while the bars were removed from the door which admitted into the temple. From that elevated point all the courts lay open before him: the inner court; that of the women, with its porticoes and galleries; the great outer court, beyond which none other than a Jew was allowed to pass. To the north, overlooking the courts of the temple, stood the palace of the king, with its high, strong walls, and its four towers or turrets at each corner or angle of the wall. Highest of all, and which was at the southeast corner of the palace, was the turret called Stratos Tower, in which, afterward, Titus sat, as, in the darkness of the night, one livid stream of fire, mounting upward in spiral wreaths, marked the last burning of the far-famed temple. The whole of this scene—of court, tower, palace—was before the eye of Pompey as he stood on the porch, perhaps between the two great brazen pillars of Jachin and Boaz.

Having entered a shrine so holy, where only the true God was worshipped, what did Pompey and those with him see? Simply two rooms,—one divided from the other by a veil or curtain, richly worked and of rich material; one room in length sixty feet by thirty in width, the other thirty feet square and as many feet in height. In one room he saw three articles of furniture; in the other, in fact, but one,—a small coffer or ark.

The outstretched wings of the cherubim, 'tis true, covered the ark; but even these figures of Heaven's own devising, unlike any thing else that was made, stood on each end of the same little coffer. The gold lid that covered it formed the mercy-seat. Here Pompey stood before the oracle itself. Here once rested the cloud of the divine glory, the visible symbol of the divine presence among his people; and here was heard the voice of God. Here God spake audibly to man; heaven was opened, and man and his Maker, as Moses on Sinai's sacred mount, met face to face,—not, indeed, in the resplendency of an actual visible appearance, but amid a radiation as glorious as man could bear. Nowhere else on this earth did God dwell so visibly as here. All other shrines—Delphic and Dodona—were faint imitations of this original and true representation of the Excellent Glory.

In the first room, or holy place, into which Pompey entered, as the great door of the temple opened, he saw on his left the golden candlestick, on his right the table of shew-bread, and directly in front of him, near the veil or curtain of the temple, the altar of incense. Of the seven lamps in the golden candlestick, three were burning and illumined the room. No ray of sunlight shone in here; the light of the place was the burning lamps, three by day, all the seven at night. All-refulgent was that room in the dark night; the priest whose duty it was to offer the evening incense trimming and filling the lamps, preparing them to burn with more than double brightness through the long and silent hours of the night.

Pompey, having gratified, perhaps, a vain-glorious

curiosity, at the expense of the most sacred feelings of the human heart, (feelings rarely disregarded by impiety itself,) came forth from the temple, and soon after prepared to leave Judea. On his departure, he took with him, besides Aristobulus, his two sons Alexander and Antigonus, and his two daughters. On his way poets sang his praise: this was the theme of all the poets of Lesbos that year. His great actions formed the common topic of discourse. The rhetoricians of Rhodes spake of him in exalted terms. And thus, covered with praises and renown, after an absence of several years, Pompey came back to Rome. No one was ever loved more by the people of Rome than Pompey; so that, as he approached the city, it poured itself forth to meet and welcome him back.

CHAPTER II.

A CHAMBER IN THE TEMPLE.

It is night. All is still within the courts of the sanctuary. The doors are all shut; the great gates are closed; the outer court itself is emptied. All is still, silent, deserted. Within the court of the priests, on the large altar, burns brightly the wood cleared of all impurity, sending its blaze wide around the sacred court. In the guard or ward room of the priests, they who watch the fire sit, waking, numbering the hours as they slowly pass. From time to time, treading the cold

marble pavement with their bare feet, they replenish the fire, ascending to the top of the brazen altar by the lengthened ascent. The Levites in their guard-room watch also, providing wood for the altar, and keeping their nightly vigil. A stillness profound reigns,—a silence so deep that it might be felt; cloister empty, court empty; all asleep, both priest and Levite, save those who watch.

In one room or chamber—somewhere, as we would judge, in the court of the women—in the gallery range, one there is that wakes and watches, rising up from slumber through the night. At night she is the sole occupant of this court. At one end of it the gate called Beautiful shuts it in; at the other end the great brazen gate which separates it from the court of Israel.* All alone she is in the now silent and deserted court,—that court in the daytime so full of worshippers, both men and women. The stars look down from above into the open court; the night-wind sweeps through the cloistered aisles; naught is heard, unless it be the footstep or low voice, in hymn or prayer, of the solitary occupant of this part of the courts of the Lord's house. Greatly is she honoured who is thus permitted to dwell continually in the Lord's house; but as a prophetess of the Most High is this honour granted. In many ways, for a series of years, in that place, God had authenticated the mission of his handmaiden, and no one doubted her high claim or the sacredness of her character.

Alone in her room, her silent chamber, she sits and

* The inner court, properly speaking, consisted of two compartments,—the court of Israel, and the court of the priests.

reads. See! She has just trimmed her lamp. She lays down this roll; she examines that: she compares the two. The label or ticket fastened to the end or top of the roll enables her to determine the name of the sacred book she is anxious to consult. Happiness inexpressible, unutterable, pervades her soul; and as sunshine dances on the sea, so does gladness spread itself over her open and serene face. Her joy is not centred in herself. She is looking out, as on a stormy sea, for land ahead and a peaceful mooring-spot. But a few days before, she heard the strife of arms in that very court; she had been a witness of the unhallowed contest between brethren,—a nation called by the name of God, and chosen out of the whole earth, divided against itself and tearing out its own bowels. She had seen the Roman soldier for the first time, and had perhaps been an eye-witness of Pompey's profanation of the temple; and now she is looking out beyond such scenes to a day of peace, of universal peace and amity. Her own nation, after all its errors and wanderings, she regards as the appointed vehicle of earth's blessing. He who is to calm earth's tempest and lull the roaring sea is to proceed from her own nation. This she reads in every page of each sacred roll on her little table; and her faith triumphant surmounts all the impossibilities of the case.

Her native home was among the hills of Asher, or Aser. She was a daughter of the tribe of Asher, and of the house and family of Phaniel. The boundaries of her tribe toward the sea touched Tyre on the north, and the ancient city of Sidon on the south. The air of her native hills was as pure as that of Thessaly, and the

valleys beautiful as that of Tempe, with Mount Olympus on one side and Ossa on the other, and the placid river Peneus flowing through the centre. She had married when but young: for seven years she had lived in wedlock; when, her husband dying, and God calling her to his work, her remaining life, spun out to great length, was dedicated to her prophetic mission. The Spirit that inspired a Deborah to utter words of fire such as never woman breathed before or since, had descended on Anna, the daughter of Phanuel. But not the actions of a Barak, not of war, does she sing: she attunes her lyre and strikes her timbrel to the conquests of the Prince of Peace. It is the reign of peace and righteousness she sees in the far distance, as Abraham saw it and was glad, as Isaiah saw it, as all the prophets and righteous men saw it; and she rejoiced, even through her tears and long and lonely vigil, at the glorious prospect.

Already had she watched these many years. Five lustrums had she now watched, as in a watch-tower, trimming her lamp, and looking intently for the first sign of the joyful day,—though probably she was now not more than fifty years old. Married in the eleventh year of the reign of Alexander Jannæus, she was a little girl of some three or four years of age at the death of his father, the good king John Hyrcanus. The years of her widowhood had glided swiftly and sweetly away, spent in the service of God, in the study of the Scriptures, (searching what and what manner of time they presignified the advent of the Son of David,) and imparting to others the illumination she herself, from time to time, received from Heaven. Here was no

Pythoress priestess, with hair dishevelled, visage distorted, frame trembling, exhausted by her own incantations, and uttering disconnected phrases and sentences, at times clear, but oftener ambiguous; but a prophetess indeed, with a mind calm and clear, her enunciation uniformly the enunciation of truth. No words from those truly inspired lips ever went forth to light up the torch of war, to scatter firebrands among the nations; but words of peace, cast as oil upon the troubled waters of time. This prophetess breathed naught but peace and of the reign of peace.

Let us, as we may, listen to her this night in her room,—in her honoured chamber in the temple. “What has passed over our earth thus far but the wave of devastation? The yawning ocean has swallowed up how many kingdoms,—kingdoms statelier far than this of mine own country! While our frail bark, tossed by so many tempests, yet lives, how low has sunk mighty Babylon!—how low haughty Assyria! They have disappeared from the earth, buried in oblivion deep, while we yet live as a nation, and our temple survives, rebuilt from its ashes. How is it that God keeps us alive while wreck after wreck is lost in the mighty ocean? Often we have been borne to the very verge of destruction, but an unseen hand is put forth for our deliverance; the bolt is turned aside; the lightning falls harmless at our feet; we swim while others, stronger than we, mightier than we, sink. Why is this? God reserves us to lift a torch on the dark shore of time; to speak a word of cheer to those struggling on a tempestuous sea; to point to an inlet to which all may steer and be safe. The earth, rocked so long, through us is to find anchor-

age at last; the veil that covers, the film that obscures the eyes of all the nations will, through us, be removed at last. We trust in Him that is to come: he will rend the veil; he will remove the darkness of ages. When he speaks, the heaving ocean of time will sink down in an immovable rest. God has not made man in vain: he has not made the earth in vain; he has not made it to be the charnel-house of man, one great burial-place, but to be a garden of the living. As for me"—may we suppose Anna the prophetess to continue to say?—"while I live for the present, I live also for and *in* the future. Thirty-two years have passed since our bridal day, twenty-five since the earth received him I that day espoused back again to her bosom; but know I not that he will live again? The hills of Asher that cover will restore him, if not to me, to Him that made him; and the glories of eternity will be his and mine and of all the redeemed."

But we will now leave Anna to her silent vigil. In the course of our narrative we shall meet her again. We have now a youthful actor to introduce to our readers, one whose life must have run to a considerable extent in a parallel line with that of Herod the Great.

CHAPTER III.

THE SON OF HILLEL.

SOMEWHERE about this time, at least not very many years before, there came to reside in Jerusalem, from Babylonia beyond the Euphrates, a teacher more distinguished than any other since Simon the Just. His name was Hillel.* The integrity of Simon the Just, according to the Jewish doctors, was revived in this new teacher; but whether he adhered to the text of Moses, as did his illustrious predecessor, is somewhat problematical. Simon was the last of a succession of eminent men who from Ezra and Nehemiah clung to the law in its unadulterated form, and who were more solicitous strictly to keep it in its purity and power than to add to it. From the days of Simon a new school sprang up, which, proceeding step by step, gradually overlaid the law with inventions and additions, till at length it pressed the very life and spirit out of it. The law became a man of clay in the hands of these bold innovators. They moulded it to any form they pleased; they could make it say just what they pleased. Hillel was of this school; but possibly from the high degree of credit he acquired for piety and justice, the reverence in which he was held, he may have risen somewhat

* Josephus calls him Pollio.

superior to the meshes of the school in which he had been trained in life and thought, even if an advocate to some extent of the traditions of the elders. The mind when it departs from the simplicity of truth soon gets entangled in a maze of bewildering questions, whether of a Greek sophist or a Jewish Talmudical writer, and both are soon lost in a labyrinth of unintelligible speculations.

This Hillel had a son by the name of Simeon.* He was, as we conjecture, about this time fifteen years of age. He was a chosen youth from his birth. Unlike other boys, his mind from the very first received a serious tinge, and, while other lads of his age were allured by pleasure, he, with a mind already raised to the conception of God, aspired after more elevated joys. It appeared almost unnatural that at such an early age he should be so inaccessible to the delights of youth, and many were the inducements held out to him to enjoy himself as others of his age and circumstances in life. No inducements prevailed with him; no gratifications allured him. Serious, sedate, calm, contemplative, though but a blooming boy, he was a pattern to many an older person. He was so dutiful he never once gave his father, who set the highest store by him, the smallest ground of complaint; while as the eldest son he was looked up to by his brothers with a deference that hardly ever a sage received from his disciples. His word was law with them, and in their innocent and healthful recreations he was their leader, counsellor, and chief contriver. He was loved by them with a love

* So it is thought, not surely known.

which only genuine worth could have begotten in their youthful hearts.

In all the loveliness of a life without a stain this boy Simeon grew up, each year adding to the beauty of his character and the spotlessness of his life. He never diverged from this path. When the passions grew stronger, his heart remained firm to its early choice. In the school of his father,—and his father had numerous scholars,—he applied himself to his studies with great diligence; but it would seem as if, taught by a higher inspiration than schools can impart, he drew in as a bee from the virgin stem, not from the scholia of his teachers, the pure truth of the word itself. While the scholars of the two chief rival schools then in Jerusalem sought to settle their disputations by fights and brawls in the streets, our Simeon, from a higher impulse, sought for truth from the source of light and truth. If the truth were hidden from others, it was not from him, and his heart was established in it. His eyes were not holden that he should not see. What hours he spent in retirement, conning the sacred page of prophet and lawgiver, feeling in his own heart the influence of what he read, and daily gaining a clearer understanding of the import of many passages dark to others, but not so dark to him! Thus was he led along each day, step by step arriving at higher degrees of knowledge, and forming conceptions of God and his word very different from what was generally entertained. Especially he saw, as he thought, light in regard to the hope of his nation, which varied not a little from commonly-received opinions. With others, he felt the impulse that the Deliverer so long expected was at hand; but the *mode*,

the *manner*, of deliverance did not present itself to his heaven-taught mind as it did to most of his countrymen. He felt, if he did not understand, the language of Moses and the prophets on this point. Who was to be the Deliverer, was the great question. He read language on this point so deep, so high, it was altogether beyond his comprehension. He stretched his mind to grasp it, but it escaped him. He saw men, but they were as trees walking. In time he hoped to receive more light.*

One night (we draw, of course, an imaginary picture) he surprised his father by asking this question. He had the roll of David's Psalms before him. "Father," he said, "how is it, if our Messia is David's son, that David calls him Lord?"

With surprise the great teacher Hillel looked at his son. He had never noticed the peculiar phraseology of the psalm. "Son," he replied, "you ask a very singular question. I am not sure that it is in my power to answer it. I will think it over, and examine it first."

At another time he asked another question, if any thing, still more puzzling. Turning to his father, in his calm, inquiring manner, "Father, does David mean that he is to be raised from the dead when he says, 'Thou wilt not leave my soul in the grave, neither wilt thou suffer thy holy one to see corruption'? or does David speak of our Messia? Is he to die?"

"Boy," again replied the father, "what puts these

* We have ventured, from the delineation in the Sacred Scriptures of Simeon's matured character in advanced age, to deduce a representation of what we suppose his youth and early manhood to have been. Such deductions, according to Aristotle, are not unwarranted.

questions into your head? David surely is dead, and his sepulchre is with us here in our city, and his body is in it still; but as to Messia, how can he die? Our law teaches us that when he comes he will abide forever. I cannot well reply to this question, my son. I must leave it for further consideration."

Thus Simeon grew up deeply meditating divine things, obtaining little light even from his father. But after a while, we may imagine, his steps were guided to Anna, and here he found a teacher more in consonance with his own views and feelings. We have no data to assist us; but it would have been strange indeed if Anna did not find in Simeon one who in the temple oft listened to her instructions as to one illuminated and inspired by God. Without a son, separate from close companionship with all save those who, with herself, were looking for the consolation of Israel, perhaps Anna found a son in Simeon; her mother's heart may have rested here, sharing with him a common joy. As for Simeon, he possibly had a teacher in Anna such as no school in Jerusalem afforded.

Book Third.

THE MAMERTINE PRISON IN ROME.

PROEM.

THE reader will pass over in his mind the space of six years during which Aristobulus, late King of Judea, was a prisoner in Rome. He was confined during this time in the Mamertine prison, which was on the top or side of the Capitoline Hill. The *Forum* was on one side of it; the *Campus Martius*, or *Field of Mars*, washed by the Tiber, was on the other. In the first part of this period Julius Cæsar, supported by Pompey and Crassus, was elected consul, and received as his province Gaul for the term of five years. Here, by his wars, he greatly increased his authority, and with the vast riches he acquired was enabled to undermine the commonwealth; for, great as were his talents, it was the wealth he acquired in Gaul which enabled him to secure so many partisans and ultimately to raise himself to supreme power. The reader, then, will bear in mind that during the six years, or term of Aristobulus's first imprisonment at Rome, Cæsar was fighting in Gaul those battles which have rendered his name so famous ever since, and made him, with Nimrod, Alexander, and others, one of the great conquerors of the earth.

To Aristobulus the imprisonment must have been a

most painful one. It is true he had his younger son Antigonus (Alexander had escaped on the journey to Rome) with him; yet, to a spirit like his, so restless, so impatient, so ambitious, each year was an age. How he must have sighed to be free! The Tiber that glided not far from his prison-window, after a few miles, at its port—*Ostia*—emptied itself into the Mediterranean,—the sea that laved his own shores. How wistfully must he have looked at the waters and thought, could he but embark on them once more, how soon would the mountains of Judea greet his sight! From the deck of the vessel, as he coasted Judea's shore, straining his vision, he might almost imagine he saw the palace of his fathers, the home of his youth, the city of his birth. But the dreary walls of his prison would soon recall him from his wanderings, and the vision of his fancy would disappear.

Tigranes, son of Tigranes, King of Armenia, whom first Lucullus and then Pompey conquered, was his fellow-prisoner. Ambition had been the bane of both; for Tigranes was as anxious to dethrone his father and succeed to his power as Aristobulus to retain the government of Judea, which of right belonged to Hyrcanus. A little moderation would have saved them both from a captivity that seemed almost hopeless; but this they had not. The love of power, the desire to reign, was too strong in the one case for filial duty, in the other for brotherly regard. They were both now reaping the sad fruits of an inordinate ambition. Their pride had received a fall; and now little else was left them but to survey the height from which they had fallen, to mourn over their blasted expectations, and perhaps at times

THE PALACE OF THE MACCABEES.



to cheer each other with their future prospects should the door of their prison ever again be opened.

To Aristobulus, his sunny land, how like light upon a beautiful picture must it have fallen upon him,—that land of all other lands the brightest and best! Where such a city as that of Zion? Where such a valley as that watered by Jordan's rapid and silvery current? Did ever sunlight glance on such hills as Carmel and Sharon, on such a plain as Esdraelon, such a lake as Galilee? Then the sacredness of that land above all others. What was Olympus's top to Judea's holy mount? Where on the whole earth could be found a temple like that of Moriah? Here, too, was the land and country of patriarchs and prophets. Well might Aristobulus cast toward it a glance of affection and recall its associations. But was Aristobulus mended by exile and imprisonment? Did he in captivity, like Manasseh, call upon the God of his fathers? We have little room to hope that he learned wisdom by the things he suffered, or was led to stay himself on the God of Israel.

CHAPTER I

THE PALACE OF THE MACCABEES.

AFTER Simon had obtained the government, (Judas Maccabeus and Jonathan his brother having fallen in defence of their country, the one in battle, the other a victim to treachery,) owing to the turbulence of the times and the weak condition of Judea, instead of

building a palace for himself on the hill of Zion, as David had done, he fixed, as a site for the royal residence on Mount Moriah, the same mountain as that on which the temple stood; but separated from the temple by a narrow ravine seventy feet in depth. This part of Moriah, on which the palace was built, was to the north of the temple; and the two buildings, temple and palace, might be called the acropolis, or citadel, of Jerusalem.

Along one side of the rocky ravine, near the edge of it, ran the south wall of the palace; on the other side of the ravine, or rocky fissure, along the edge of that also, ran the great northern outer wall of the temple, in a parallel line with that of the palace,—each, like two combatants, grimly frowning on the other.*

It is important, however, for the reader to recollect that the extreme length of the palace from east to west was but half a furlong, or three hundred feet, whereas the whole length of the wall of the temple from east to west was seven hundred and fifty feet,—that is, three hundred and fifty feet longer than that of the palace.

The reader will imagine to himself, *first*, the long northern outer wall of the temple, running along the edge of the narrow rocky ravine, from east to west, seven hundred and fifty feet. Exactly midway of this wall was the great gate called *Tedi*. It was the only gate in the north wall of the temple, (whereas the wall on the west had four gates;) and, as we have said, it was placed in the very centre of it.

* Thus in Athens the *Museum*, situated on a hill, was separated by a ravine, or valley, from the *Areopagus*, situated on an opposite eminence of the same hill.

On the opposite side of the ravine, nearly on a range with this gate *Tedi*, let the reader fix in his mind the southeast angle or corner of the palace. Here Simon, as we may say, broke ground, and upreared the southeast buttress of the palace. From this starting-point the south wall of the palace ran westward half a furlong, or three hundred feet, coming out nearly with the northwest angle or corner of the temple. The palace, therefore, hardly ranged half the length of the great northern outer wall of the temple. But so far as it went it faced the northern wall of the temple, one on *this* side, the other on *that*, of the dark, narrow ravine which lay between them.

The palace, according to a very favorite way of building with the Jews, was perfectly square. The strong, thick walls, like those which enclosed the Piræus, the harbor of Athens, were sixty feet in height, and two furlongs, or twelve hundred feet, in compass. On every side they were half a furlong, or three hundred feet, forming a wide, spacious, and secure enclosure.* Four turrets, or towers, one at each angle or corner of the castle, rose above the walls. The one at the southeast angle, which was called *Stratos tower*,† was the highest, and overlooked all the courts of the temple. It was directly over-against the inner court, where stood the great brazen altar of sacrifice, where the bullock was slain with his head drawn down by a rope to the strong iron ring-bolt, and where priest and Levite ministered unto the Lord.

* The thickness of the wall that enclosed the Piræus was "greater than the space occupied by two wagons."

† See page 36, book ii. of this work.

Two pair of white marble stairs, sustained by arches sprung over the narrow, dark, deep ravine which separated the palace from the temple, led the one to the gate *Tedi*, the other to the gate called *Asuppin*, on the west. A subterranean passage also connected the palace and temple. It came out probably near the king's ivory chair in the court of Israel, where he sat on occasions of festival and religious worship.

As to the open space in front of that part of the temple which was not covered by the palace, a very wide and very deep ditch was dug here,—a moat or ditch so wide and deep as to be almost impassable by an enemy. The ditch or moat was doubtless an extension of the ravine. It must have extended three hundred and fifty feet from the gate *Tedi* east to the Valley of Jehoshaphat which intersected it. With the palace (which was itself a strong fortress) covering one-half of the temple toward the north, and the great moat or ditch the other, the temple was invulnerable from this quarter.

We will now pass out of the great court of the Gentiles by the north gate *Tedi*, ascend the marble stairway, and examine the palace within. The interior, as we have said, covered a space or area of twelve hundred feet. In the very centre of this large space was an open court, surrounded by a portico. This was set apart for the use of the garrison and for barracks. Beyond this square, the rest of the space was occupied by buildings, gardens, and courts. There were halls of audience, sleeping-apartments, banqueting-rooms, some smaller, some larger, some more and some less sumptuously furnished. In the banqueting-rooms were

side-boards covered with gold and silver plate,—cups, ewers, (or pitchers,) vases, and goblets. Rich carpets, piles of the softest cushions, tapestry, carved work, lofty domes, rows of marble columns, showed the wealth and prosperity of the house of the Maccabees. In the wide and ample space, also, were trees, aviaries, fish-ponds, and fountains. One could walk under the shade of trees, listen to the sound of falling waters, and be regaled with the bloom and fragrance of orange-groves. 'Twas pleasant, also, to listen to the song of birds in the branches, or, in early spring-time, to the low cooing of the dove, or, at night, to the rustling of the soft evening wind among the leaves of the vines loaded with fruit. There might also, at certain hours, be heard by the inmates of the palace the sound of trumpet, of horn, and of drum, as the soldiers of the garrison drew up in array in the great square of the castle; or it might be the tinkling sound of harp, or, more merry yet, of timbrel, striking anew the triumphal song of Miriam, played or swept by one of Zion's daughters. Bristling with the array of war, the palace, or royal castle, was also a home and a dwelling, where loved ones met, where the heart was softened and purified by kindred ties.

The propinquity of the palace to the temple, how interesting! Ascend *Stratos tower*; go out on the iron balustrade, cast your eye down on the wide area of the temple. Think of this mount,—this sacred mount. Where the altar stands (it is directly under your eye from the tower) there once stood Abraham, with the uplifted knife, ready to sacrifice his son Isaac,—the heir of promise, the hope of all coming generations. Bare,

bleak, and desolate was the mountain-rock then ; not another soul stood near the spot, beside the father of the faithful and Isaac his son. Not a sound was to be heard. The wave of time has swept on. On the same spot stands the angel of the Lord, with the avenging sword in his hand. It is about to descend on the fated city. At the voice of intercession, at the cry of David, at the voice of the elders of Israel, it was returned to its sheath, and the wasting plague at once ceased. Not another soul perished. Next see David building an altar on this very spot, to mark the divine interposition,—the spot where justice sheathed its glittering sword. Then uprose, in solemnest silence, and amid awe profound, the temple of the living God, upreared by Solomon, and the altar on which, when the first sacrifice was laid, fire descended from heaven and consumed it.

From *Stratos tower*—from the iron balustrade—the eye sweeps over at a glance the whole temple-area. Priest and Levite are there ; rams, fed-beasts, bullocks, lambs, he-goats.* There are the strong iron rings to which the bullock is fastened as in a slaughter-house while the sacred knife is drawn across the throat, and the sacrificial victim falls bleeding, weakened, to the ground. There is the marble table on which the different parts of the slaughtered victim are carefully placed, ready to be laid on the altar. Without resistance the gentle lamb suffers himself each returning night and morning to be laid on the same sacred altar,—expressive type of that infinite Sacrifice which in the end (or

* Isaiah i. 11.

evening) of time was to be paid for the sins of the whole world. At three of the clock in the afternoon, what crowds assemble for evening prayer! With what holy solemnity the priest whose lot it is for that day to offer the evening incense ascends the steps that lead to the porch of the temple, disappearing for a short space from the sight of the multitude, while he places his censer, glowing with the fragrant spices, on the table of incense in the holy place! What multitudes of men stand in the court of the women (the usual worshipping-place) below! How crowded are the galleries above with Judea's daughters, engaged in the worship, not of Jupiter, or Minerva, or Apollo, but of the Most High God.

Such the sight to be seen from the iron balustrade of *Stratos tower* as it presents itself right under your eye. But you might extend your view. You might cast your eye on the great moat or ditch on your left,—on the Valley of Jehoshaphat, with the brook Kedron flowing through it, when not dried up, like the Ilissus of Athens, by the drought of summer,—the olive-gardens beyond,—the Hill of Olivet overtopping all, city, palace, tower. Then on the right, spread out as a map, lay the populous *lower* city, as it was called in opposition to Zion, or the upper city, with its large granaries and its extensive warehouses, separated from Moriah also by a valley, once wide and deep, but now nearly filled up,* and crossed by bridges. To the south, on Zion's holy

* This valley was filled up by Simon, after the Syrians were expelled from the citadel they had built on Mount Akra. The whole city was engaged in this work by sections, for the space of three years. By this means Akra, which was higher than Moriah, was levelled, and the valley filled up. The work was carried on day and night, without intermission.

hill, the upper city,—the city of David, like the Palatine Hill of Rome, constituted the original site of the capital of Judea. It also was divided from Mount Moriah by a valley, which was crossed by a magnificent causeway shaded on each side with trees. From this valley gurgled Siloah's soft waters. Mournful to behold, this city, so fair to the eye, seated on a flowery though rocky mount, (the district of Juda, like that of Attica, was rocky and mountainous,) was still, at the time of which we write, without walls or tower. Its great walls and lofty and strong towers lay in ruins round about it; yet otherwise its gardens bloomed, its orchards were filled with fruit, its fields were white with the waving grain. Jerusalem, enclosed amid flower-gardens, orchards, and vineyards, was indeed beautiful to the eye; yet, what was of far greater importance, all its associations were so sacred, so infinitely precious. This was earth's chosen spot, the city of the Great King, destined in circling years to be the spot of the metropolis of the whole earth. Here the Gordian knot of destiny is to be untied, and the great designs of Jehovah to be fully unfolded to the dark and erring vision of man. But we must now leave this scene, and the reflections to which it would naturally give rise. This partial glance seemed to be necessary to associate the palace, the temple, and the city in the mind of the reader. We now proceed with the narrative.

CHAPTER II.

SIX YEARS OF THE LIFE OF HEROD AFTER THE RETURN
FROM PETRA, THE CITY OF EDMOM OR ESAU.

LIFE's morning now began to open fair and auspicious upon Herod. His father Antipater, next to Hyrcanus, occupied the chief place in the land. Having been chiefly instrumental in restoring Hyrcanus to the sovereignty of Judea, he administered the government for him. Judea prospered under his rule. He was a man of exceeding benignity and wisdom. He was a true friend, as well as wise counsellor, to Hyrcanus. His firmness, energy, and perspicacity supplied the lack, made up for the deficiencies of Hyrcanus. Deeply devoted to the political interests of his country, he uniformly sought to conciliate the Romans. Moderate in his views, prudent in his measures, he impressed upon his children fidelity and obedience to the king. Their love and veneration for their father shone forth. Taught by him, imitating his example, they were temperate, diligent; and, though nursed in the bosom of ease and luxury, though surrounded with all the appliances of wealth, they rose above the seductions of pleasure and labored to fit themselves for a life of usefulness and distinction.

In regard to Herod, we must conceive of him as living

in Jerusalem after the return from Petra, attending school and passing through the various grades of a Jewish education. His chief study was the writings of Moses and the prophets, or, perhaps, to speak with more propriety, the traditions of the elders. The Sabbath as a divine institution he was taught strictly to observe. The yearly festivals, he, with all other Jewish children, participated in: indeed, all the rites and ceremonies enjoined by the Levitical law were continually before his eyes. There was also the synagogue-service,—the temple-worship: in the one he heard the Scriptures read every Sabbath, both the law and the prophets; in the other he saw daily—almost hourly—the rites of his holy religion performed. How solemn, how sacred, was that service! how deeply impressive! His youthful heart as yet untainted, unwarped by unholy passions or excited by fiery ambition, could not fail to receive the words of instruction which fell from the lips of the preacher, or which he read in the holy oracles, as the earth, prepared by the genial rays of the sun and softened by the showers of the latter rain, receives in its bosom the seed that is sown in it.

Youth—the softness, the tenderness, the innocence, of youth—was his once, as well as ours. There were four brothers,—Phasaël, (Phasaelus,) Herod, Joseph, and Pheroras the youngest, who, with Herod, survived the other two. There was one sister,—the youngest of all,—Salome. Great affection subsisted between the four brothers. The bond that united them was very strong. Together they walked around the holy city, in its suburbs, among the rich corn-fields and orchards in which it was embosomed. Often, no doubt, they stood on the bridge

or causeway that connected the Hill of Zion to Mount Moriah, under the shade of the trees that bordered it, watching Siloah's stream as it flowed in crystal clearness (issuing out of a rock in the depth of the valley) softly and musically along. Of a summer afternoon, often, no doubt, they ascended Mount Olivet, looking up at the azure sky unmarked by a single cloud, inhaling the gentle breeze, and lost in that pleasing revery which so oft steals over us in our early youth in intervals of play and healthful activity. In the market-place on holy days they mingled with their school-fellows and danced to the sound of the pipe; or, imitating (as boys are wont to do) some holy solemnity, they wore mourning-weeds and walked in solemn procession, chaunting a dirge, or making lamentation with their voices. Whether in play or otherwise, from the first it would seem as if Herod always had (though Phasaël was the eldest) the pre-eminence among his brothers.

Considering the relative position of Antipater to Hyrcanus, it is perfectly natural to infer that his children had free access to the palace. Here in early life with Alexandra, daughter and only child of Hyrcanus, they spent many a happy day. The palace was possibly as much their home as was their father's house; and especially did Herod receive from Hyrcanus marks of almost paternal regard. The bright and active boy drew strongly the regard and excited the notice of the inert king. Amid the gardens of the palace Herod and his brothers roved; its long corridors they wandered through; in its halls they sat and feasted. All its gorgeousness and pomp was familiar to their eye.

As Herod grew up, he was initiated in the military

art,—and this probably in connection with the garrison, or body-guard of the king, stationed in the palace. In the reign of Alexander Jannæus, owing to the civil war that raged, (arising out of the contest between that king and the sect of the Pharisees,) foreign soldiers from Lesser Asia had been introduced into the service of the king; Alexandra, his widow, continued the custom; and both Hyrcanus and Aristobulus in their civil broils had called in foreign aid. Enrolled perhaps at quite an early age among the soldiers of the garrison, himself naturally expert in war, Herod was taught the rudiments of the military art; though not until he was sixteen or seventeen years of age did any opportunity occur for him to engage in war. For the space of six years did Judea enjoy peace after the restoration of Hyrcanus to the throne by Pompey. The superior skill of Herod in war, united to great bravery, were made available to that height of power and greatness which he afterward attained.

While, then, Aristobulus sighed in prison at Rome,—while Cæsar fought in Gaul, (having received that province *first*, for a term of five years,)—while Cicero bemoaned himself in exile, (having been unjustly banished by the artifices of Clodius, one of the most pestilent tribunes Rome ever saw,) but, being recalled, at the end of fifteen months returned in triumph to the city,—while Pompey spent his time with his youthful bride Julia (Julius Cæsar's daughter) idly in and about Rome, moving from one villa to another,—Herod in Jerusalem grew up toward manhood. As a thrifty and vigorous plant he shot upward, giving early promise of future eminence. His very earliest years had now

passed; the first sweet zest of life he had sipped; he had had the first taste of the banquet; and the fine gauze, the silvery tissue, that hangs over every thing was life's opening scenes begin to pass before the eyes, is about to give place to coarser drapery,—to a truer perception of reality.

CHAPTER III.

MARRIAGE OF ALEXANDRA, DAUGHTER OF HYRCANUS.

WE have already intimated (in the Proem of this book*) that Alexander, the eldest son of Aristobulus, escaped from Pompey while he was on his way back from Judea to Rome. Pompey, when he left Judea in the fall of the year, proceeded first to Pontus, in Asia Minor, the ancient patrimony of Mithridates, but henceforward a province of the Roman Empire. While at Amisus, in Pontus, the embalmed body of Mithridates was brought to him to be disposed of as he pleased. He ordered it to be buried, with all the rites of honorable sepulture, at Sinope, situated on the Euxine, (or Black Sea,) the burial-place of this race of kings. Pompey had reached Jericho on his way to besiege Jerusalem, when the news of the death of Mithridates was first brought to him. He had hardly encamped in the vicinity of this celebrated city, amid its palm-trees, of a lovely evening in the month of June, (just about the

* See book iii. p. 49.

season of the year when the balsam-tree, from the incisions made in it, begins to distil its precious unguent,) when swift messengers were seen hastening toward the camp with their spears wreathed with laurel,—a token of good tidings. The soldiers, impatient to hear the news, made a judgment-seat of their pack-saddles in the *principia* of the camp,* when Pompey announced to them the death of Mithridates. He had perished, slain by his own hand.

Mithridates was seventy-two years old at his death. He began his reign when but twelve years of age. He was descended from a long line of kings, the first of whom was one of the seven princes that slew Smerdis the Magian and placed on the Persian throne Darius Hystaspes, the friend of the Jews, in the sixth year of whose reign the second temple was finished.†

Mithridates was forty-five years of age when he came in collision with the Romans. They were alarmed by his active, enterprising spirit. To serve as a check upon him, Sylla, after his term of prætorship had expired, was sent to Cappadocia. He compelled Mithridates to quit his hold of Cappadocia, which he had forcibly annexed to his native kingdom Pontus. But soon after Mithridates finding the opportunity favourable, he reannexed Cappadocia and added Bithynia to his possessions. War arose, from this bold and decided step, between him and the Romans, whom he defeated in two battles. Encouraged by this success, he overran Lesser Asia, and took possession of Greece,

* A large square in the centre of the camp.

† Ezra vi. The building of the second temple was completed in the year before Christ 515.

with nearly all the Grecian isles. It was while he held Asia and Greece in subjection that he massacred in one day in Asia, of Romans and Italians, eighty thousand men, (Plutarch says one hundred and fifty thousand.)* Sylla now took the command, and at Cheronæa, and on the large plain of Orchomenus, in Bœotia, with a very small force routed the vast armies of Mithridates. He soon compelled this proud, haughty, and cruel monarch to sue for and accept an ignominious peace. Two other wars followed this, the whole covering a space of nearly thirty years. As we have seen, the third and last war was conducted by Lucullus and Pompey, but ended by Pompey.

Pompey, having settled the affairs of Pontus and granted to Mithridates an honorable burial, (which he himself was to be denied,) proceeded to Ephesus. Here he spent the winter. While he was in Ephesus, he was visited by Cato, then a young man, and travelling through Asia, not for pleasure, but to make himself personally acquainted with the condition of the Eastern provinces. He travelled with much simplicity and with but few attendants. His virtue, the greatness of his soul, had already at that early age (Cato was at this time twenty-four years old) made him celebrated at home and abroad; yet the cities he visited would hardly believe it was Cato,—he made so little show, and did not exercise the authority with which he was invested in a spirit of insolence and exaction.† When, however, Cato came to Ephesus, in Asia *Proper*, Pompey received him with such distinguished honor that wherever he

* See Life of Sylla.

† See Plutarch's Life of Cato.

went after this he was regarded with the respect due to his superior character and shining reputation.

It was perhaps while Pompey tarried at Ephesus, spending the winter in this capital of Asia ere he set out the following spring for Rome, (stopping at Lesbos, Rhodes, and Athens on his way,) that Alexander, eldest son of Aristobulus, contrived his escape. He returned to Judea, and appears not to have been molested. Pompey, having so long a train of captives, felt perhaps that he could spare this one. His mother, who had been left behind, (the only one of the family,) and who, unlike her husband, saw the impolicy of opposition to the Roman power, had upon quitting the palace in Jerusalem taken up her abode in the ancient city of Askalon, on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. Here, after his escape, joined—as we may suppose—by her eldest son Alexander, with what joy must she have hailed his unexpected arrival! Afterward she was joined also by her two daughters, who, when Pompey's two days' triumph had ended, with all the other captives, save Aristobulus, Antigonus, and Tigranes, were allowed to return to their homes. Time healing somewhat the divisions in the families of the two brothers, after a while Alexander went up to Jerusalem. He was cordially received by his kind, indulgent uncle Hyrcanus, and, some time during the space of the six years which is the space covered by this book, married his cousin Alexandra, daughter and only child of Hyrcanus, king and high-priest of the Jews.

Of this marriage—that of Alexander, son of Aristobulus, and Alexandra, only child of Hyrcanus—was born Mariamne, afterward wife of Herod the Great. A son,

by the name of Aristobulus, after his grandfather, (prisoner at the time in Rome,) also proceeded from this marriage. Without a doubt, Antipater, father of Herod, favored this union of the two families. Had he been opposed to it, so great was his influence, and so implicitly at this time did Hyrcanus submit to his counsel, it would not have taken place. It is a proof of his moderation and disinterestedness, and shows convincingly that he sought not the throne either for himself or his sons. Had Antipater desired the throne, a word from him to Julius Cæsar, whom he so signally aided at Alexandria in Egypt at a period subsequent to this, would have sufficed. Julius Cæsar, in gratitude to him for his assistance, was ready to grant any favor he asked. But Antipater the father never varied in his fidelity to Hyrcanus. He was always animated by the most sincere love for his country.

By the marriage of Alexander and Alexandra, it would appear that the interests of the Asamonean family were now indissolubly united, and that from their issue would descend the future princes, the rulers, the governors, of Judea. But a dark tale is before us. Few names in history are associated with more melancholy recollections than that of Mariamne. Her early and tragic doom, together with her beauty and accomplishments, have excited commiseration in every succeeding age. But we leave her sad story to be developed in the course of this narrative.

Book Fourth.

A RETROSPECTIVE GLANCE.*

PROEM.

TEN more eventful years in the history of the world can hardly be found than those of which we are about to take a rapid survey.

In the foreground of the picture stands the usurpation of the whole power of the Roman commonwealth by Julius Cæsar. Toward the close of the expiration of his second term of five years in Gaul, Cæsar consummated an act that he had long pondered, and which, indeed, had been the dream of his life. His ambition knew no bounds, and, like Alexander, nothing could satisfy him but universal empire. Cæsar must be first. He could know of no equal, much less a superior. When he crossed the Rubicon, that divided his province from the rest of Italy, it was *aut Cæsar, aut nihil*,—either the whole world or nothing. As long as he could use Pompey for his purposes, he used him; but, when he had no further need of his services, Pompey, the ladder by which he had risen, was set aside, and all recollection of his services obliterated. Pompey, fatuously blinded, was wholly unprepared for the rapid advance of Cæsar

* This review covers the space of about ten years,—the time between the third and fourth books.

upon Rome, and as Cæsar, with a small body of men, drew near the city, he fled. The battle of Pharsalia closed the contest; and Pompey, flying to Egypt, was treacherously slain on the shore of the sea, not far from Pelusium, by order of Ptolemy Auletes, brother of Cleopatra. Cæsar soon after coming to Alexandria in Egypt, the head of Pompey was brought to him, under the impression it would be an acceptable present. Cæsar turned away from the sight. The body of Pompey was buried on the sea-shore by his freedman Philip and one of his old soldiers, who, accidentally passing that way at the time, assisted at the funeral pyre. From the time Pompey left Judea, from the time of the capture of the Temple, his power and reputation had declined. That was the period at which his fortune—hitherto so prosperous—reached its acme; thenceforward it steadily declined. Those eight or nine years that Cæsar fought with such success in Gaul, Pompey spent, not in Spain or Africa,—the provinces which had been assigned him,—but, as we have already said, in and about Rome. He did worse. He supported Cæsar with his soldiers, and carried his most obnoxious and unconstitutional measures by violence.

The next prominent event was the death of Cæsar. Tamely as the Roman people afterward submitted to the usurpation of the sovereign authority by Octavius (surnamed Augustus) Cæsar,* they could not rest under that of Julius Cæsar. Cato was alive then, as was also Brutus: the one had not yet fallen at Utica in Africa; the other

* Octavius' mother's name was Atia. She was daughter of Julia, sister of Julius Cæsar.

had not yet been defeated at Philippi, pierced by the same sword that his unfriendly hand had plunged into Cæsar's breast. For three years and six months Cæsar held his power; but at the end of that time, in the *Curia*, or senate-house, built by Pompey after his return from the East, at the foot of the statue of Pompey, Cæsar fell, pierced by many wounds. His last act was to cover his face with his mantle.*

During this time, also, several important events had occurred in Judea. One of the first was the attempt on the part of Alexander, eldest son of Aristobulus, even after his marriage with his uncle's daughter and only child Alexandra, to dethrone his uncle and take his place. He had nearly succeeded. At this time the Jews were ripe for any innovation. The love of change, the desire of novelty, had become a ruling passion with the nation. Perhaps the expected advent of their Messiah, clothed with the kingly attributes and royal power that they had been taught to ascribe to him even at his first appearing, contributed not a little to this feeling of restlessness,—of discontent. In every new personage that appeared and promised them great political and social advantages, if they did not see in the claimant their Messiah, they saw what either precluded or prepared the way for his coming and kingdom. It was, moreover, a period of great changes, of civil convulsions. All things were in motion. The very fabric of society appeared ready to fall to pieces. Governments were overturned; kingdoms were sub-

* Suetonius thinks it quite doubtful whether he used the words, "Et tu, Brute!"

verted; all settled order and authority seemed to be violated. Alexander took advantage of this unsettled state of things, which existed in Judea as well as elsewhere, and especially of the love of change among his own countrymen, and raised a formidable army against his uncle and the father of his wife. As Pompey had left Jerusalem (and the fortresses of the country also) in a very defenceless condition, with little power or force in the hands of Hyrcanus, Alexander would surely have succeeded had it not been for the timely aid of the Roman army. Aulus Gabinius was at this time proconsul of Syria,—the same Gabinius who acted under Pompey. He was aided by Mark Antony, who now made his first campaign,—serving in Judea under Gabinius, at the head of the cavalry. Antony, then a young man, (but who was already noted in Rome for his excesses, and had been expelled from his father's house on account of his debts,) fought with great gallantry, and contributed more than any one person to the success of the war. Alexander, having been defeated in battle near Jerusalem with great loss, retreated to the strong fortress of Alexandra, situated on an eminence, and which, with other fortresses, (as they were loosely guarded,) he had got possession of in the commencement of the war. At the intercession of his mother, who arrived in the camp of Gabinius during the siege, this general agreed to overlook the conduct of Alexander upon the surrender the fortresses he had seized and upon laying down his arms. But hardly was this war with the son over, when Aristobulus the father, having escaped from his prison in Rome, renewed the contest. He was, however, soon

conquered, though he fought with distinguished bravery. Like all of his family, (save his brother Hyrcanus,) he lacked not courage, and a strong arm, and an indomitable heart. Once more the unhappy king, a prisoner and in chains, was sent back to his prison-house in Rome. Mark Antony figured in this war likewise.*

Crassus next made his appearance in Judea, following in the footsteps of Pompey, Gabinius, and Mark Antony. By what deserved no other name than that of a conspiracy against the Roman commonwealth, (we speak here, of course, of what occurred before the usurpation of Cæsar,) Crassus, Cæsar, and Pompey, at Lucca, entered into a compact to unite their influence and to divide the provinces between them. By this arrangement, Cæsar received Gaul for a second term of five years as his province,—Pompey, Spain and Africa,—and Crassus the East. Crassus's grand scheme was war against the Parthians. In the prosecution of this scheme he came to Syria as proconsul in the place of Gabinius. To gratify his insatiate avarice, as well as to obtain funds for his unjust expedition, (the Parthians had committed no aggressive acts,) he marched with a portion of his army to Jerusalem, with a view to spoil the Temple of its sacred treasures. He robbed it to the amount, it is said, of ten thousand talents,—a sum equal to that in the temple of Delphi, which was regarded as the richest in the world. When Pompey took the Temple, he did not touch its sacred treasure; but Crassus, the most rapacious of men, as he was also

* See life of Antony by Plutarch.

the richest man in Rome, divested God's house of its wealth, stripped it of its ornaments to fill at least in part his own coffers,* and then set out for Parthia. In Mesopotamia, near Carrhæ, where Abram dwelt for a time, Crassus perished,—the Romans having there experienced the most disastrous overthrow since the battle of Cannæ.

As to the family of Antipater, in the period to which we now refer, it continued to rise in power and public estimation. But what most contributed to its rise was the aid afforded Cæsar by Antipater in Egypt. For several months after Cæsar's arrival in Alexandria, in Egypt, in pursuit of Pompey, he had to sustain himself with a small force against a formidable insurrection which suddenly broke out in the city, seconded by the Egyptian army, which advanced from Pelusium against him. Fortifying himself in a single section of the city, close by the water-side, and disposing of his men to the greatest advantage, Cæsar was able to defend himself against every attack. His strategic skill and valor availed against innumerable odds. In this emergency he sent for aid into Asia; and among those who hastened to his assistance and rendered him the most timely aid was Antipater. He raised, with great expedition, a body of Jews, induced neighboring powers to act with him, and then, joining Mithridates, one of Cæsar's officers, at Askelon, crossed the desert, took Pelusium; and when the Jews who inhabited Onion—a district of country in the Delta, between that city and Alexandria—opposed

* Crassus laid the foundation of his great wealth during the civil wars of Sylla and Marius, purchasing confiscated property at a very low rate.

his progress, he prevailed upon them to allow his army to pass without opposition. Crossing the Delta, Antipater, with Mithridates, defeated the Egyptians in several battles,—when, a union having been effected with Cæsar, a complete victory was obtained. Ptolemy Auletes was drowned crossing the Nile; and Cæsar held Egypt for and in the name of the youthful Queen Cleopatra.

His feeling of friendship to Antipater from this time, and to the Jews also, was very strong. A pillar was erected in Alexandria, endowing the Jews with all the privileges of the first class of citizens in this great city. Antipater was made a Roman citizen. Cæsar also granted him permission to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, and gave Hyrcanus anew the title of King of the Jews, with the right to wear the diadem.

We have now reached a point at which we can take up the thread of our narrative and proceed smoothly and consecutively onward. The time of nearly if not quite ten years the reader will place between this book and the last. We open, however, the first chapter in this book a little before the death of Julius Cæsar. One of Cæsar's last acts was the confirmation of his permission to Antipater, by a decree of the Senate and people of Rome, to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.

CHAPTER I.

THE REBUILDING OF THE WALLS OF JERUSALEM,
B.C. 47.

IMMEDIATELY on receiving Cæsar's permission to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, Antipater commenced the work. The grant itself was sent by Cæsar to Rome either from Egypt or Syria; but, owing to various causes, it did not assume the form of a decree by the Senate and people of Rome till in Cæsar's fifth consulate,—the last year of his life.* The decree thus ratified was deposited in the Capitol,—in the same manner as the decree of Cyrus for the restoration of the Jews to their own land, and the rebuilding of their city and temple, was deposited in Ecbatana.

Sixteen years had elapsed since Pompey, in the pride of his power, had torn down the walls of the holy city. And where was Pompey now?—where was his greatness, where his power? The magnificent structure he had built—as he fondly hoped, to his own glory—had crumbled into dust; his children were either dead, slain by the sword, or proscribed, and himself and his power were no more. Men pass away, but the decrees of God remain. The time had not yet arrived for the second

* A copy of the original decree of the Senate and people of Rome was made by Josephus and transferred to his "Jewish Antiquities." The reader will find it in book 14, chap. 10, sec. 5.

dispersion of the tribes of Israel and the desolation of the land; and once more the walls of Jerusalem are seen rising from their ruins.

The vast portals of the city, the huge gates, the high towers, rose up and stood on their old foundations. The materials strewed the ground in every direction: they had not been removed. Along with the rest, it would seem that the piece of sculpture of the city of Susa, or Shusan, which had been placed over the gateway of the great eastern gate, (which faced the front of the temple,) had not been materially injured. Out of gratitude to Cyrus and Darius, their benefactors, the Jews had carved a representation of their capital, Susa, and placed it over the eastern gate, and rude hands had not so defaced the picture but that it was restored to its former place. The picture was seen as in the past, connecting the names of Cyrus and Darius with the more modern name of Julius Cæsar,—showing that great kings and great captains were in the past, as we are told they will be in the future, “nursing-fathers” of this wonderful, God-loved nation.

It is not at all likely that Pompey spared the walls of the temple. But now once more they too rise in their strength, as well as the walls of the city. They were built, as before, forty feet in height and of proportionate thickness. The time had not yet come for the walls either of the city or of the temple to be “salvation, and their gates praise.” Before the Captivity, though the city had walls, the temple had not. This was the work of the Maccabees and of comparatively recent date. But now scarcely a stronger fortress anywhere could be found than the temple of the Jews; and

when the city was taken by Titus, about a hundred years later, he found, as Pompey had done, that this was the hardest part of **his** work.

We may easily suppose that the Jews labored at this work with incredible activity night and day; and, as they had no opposition, and Cæsar's word was all-powerful, the walls rose up rapidly. Possibly by the time the original grant of Cæsar was confirmed by the Senate—an interval say of about three years—the work was nearly completed. The temple and palace stood apart on the Hill of Moriah enclosed by a wall ~~of~~ their own: Zion's Hill, the city of David-*proper*, had its separate wall which begirt its steep heights; and Akra, the lower city, as it was called, had its wall. The intersections were so run, that, while each of the above-named sections or quarters was surrounded by its own wall, (forming, so to speak, three distinct cities,) one general wall encompassed the whole city.

Thus was the city prepared, as it would appear, externally, for the advent of its King,—the promised Shiloh or Messiah,—forty-seven years before his appearance as the Son of Mary and Joseph into our world. To Julius Cæsar it belonged, under God, to restore to Zion her kingly power,—the sceptre and the diadem; to Julius Cæsar it was ordained, as the honored instrument, to issue the decree—as to Cyrus of old—to restore the nation to dignity and power. What Pompey demolished, his great rival and successful opponent restored. But that Cæsar was induced thus to act we must attribute to Antipater, the father of Herod the Great. His services to Cæsar in Egypt during the Alexandrian war procured

all this favor. His kingdom, his crown, and now his new-walled city, Hyrcanus owed to Antipater.

Once more Jerusalem took its place as a chief city among the nations; once more the sceptre was put into the hands of the tribe of Judah, and Hyrcanus was the lawgiver of his people. Its neighbor, Syria, had been blotted out as a nation: the house of the Seleucidæ was no more. This once-powerful kingdom, to which Judea had so long been a vassal, which under Antiochus Epiphanes had attempted to root out Judea from the earth, had become a province of the Roman empire; but the sceptre still remained in the hand of Judah. The kingdom of Pontus, Mithridates at its head, after nearly thirty years of war with the Romans, had become a province also of the Romans; yet the sceptre of Israel was still in the hands of its sovereign prince. Egypt yet remained an independent kingdom like Judea; but its days were already numbered: in a little while, with the overthrow of Antony by Augustus Cæsar, and the death of Cleopatra, it would cease to be a kingdom; but the rod or sceptre of Israel would continue to bud, the horn of the Lord's Anointed would continue to flourish. In years long past, when Israel went down into Egypt,—when an eretime Jewish herdsman was the chief ruler, next to Pharaoh, of the most ancient and powerful monarchy on the globe,—the patriarch Jacob, with his twelve sons standing around his death-bed, had said, "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until *Shiloh* come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be."* That word must be

* Genesis xlix. 10.

fulfilled; and now, as Shiloh's appearing drew nigh, Judea, which, like Syria, a short time since tottered to its fall, stands up as an independent, sovereign kingdom. Rome, so great, puts forth her hands to sustain this little nation. Jerusalem nestles in her bosom and is safe under the shadow of her broad, protecting wing. This is the Lord's doing; and it is marvellous in our eyes. Who can withstand God? What power can crush when he says, Spare?

CHAPTER II.

HEROD GOVERNOR OF GALILEE.

DURING the three years and a half that Julius Cæsar, after the battle of Pharsalia and the death of Pompey on the strand of Egypt, held absolute sway as the sole head of the Roman commonwealth, Judea enjoyed a second interval of quiet. For six years, as we have seen, after the return from Petra and the re-establishment of the rule of Hyrcanus by Pompey, it was at rest. Then arose the troubles occasioned by Alexander and Aristobulus; and now under Cæsar came peace a second time to the torn and convulsed land. After Cæsar had shown such marked favor to the Jews, Antipater went everywhere through the land, encouraging the well-disposed and intimidating the factious and turbulent; and this with such success that while Cæsar lived there was no further disturbance. While, then, Cæsar fought in Spain

and Africa against the feeble remnant of Pompey's party,—while Cato, unable to survive the liberties of his country, (which he had uniformly upheld, despite smiles or threats,) fell on his sword at Utica, near Carthage, consoling his last moments with the perusal of Plato's Discourse on the Immortality of the Soul,*—Judea enjoyed peace. The sword ravaged not its borders; the tillers of the field sowed and reaped unmolested; the clamor of discord was hushed, and the nation revived after the calamities it had suffered. All over the land was breathed the soft, sweet breath of peace; and under the shade of his own spreading vine and the broad leaf of his own fig-tree each man of this nation of vine-dressers, ploughmen, and shepherds sat down, protected by the Roman eagle. Antipater, to whose energy, wisdom, and valor this happy state of things was to be attributed, could not fail to survey the work of his hands with a high degree of satisfaction.

At this auspicious moment, Antipater, with the concurrence of the king, Hyrcanus, brought forward his two eldest sons to share with him the labors and honors and emoluments of the government. Phasaël, the eldest, was made Governor of Jerusalem, and Herod, now twenty-five years old, was appointed Governor of Galilee.

Herod was married at this time. He had married one of his own countrywomen. His father, Antipater, had sought a wife for his son in one of the first of the Idumean families. Her name was Doris.

Sepphoris, the capital city of Galilee, was the chief

* He read it through three times the last night of his life. See *Life of Cato* by Plutarch. See *Phædo*; or the Immortality of the Soul.

residence of Herod, as Governor of Galilee, as it was many years afterward of his son Herod Antipas in the time of the gospel history. This stood nearly, if not quite, on a line with the city of Nazareth on the east, and Ptolemais,* a sea-port of the Mediterranean, on the west. Built on a hill, it overlooked the plain† which stretched out to the chain of hills or mountains within whose bosom Nazareth nestled as a bird in its nest. Let one cross the luxuriant plain eastward from Sepphoris, the capital city of Galilee, let him ascend the mountain-range that bounds the plain on the east, and look below; and he sees Nazareth,—at the very period of which we write, the residence of the lineage of the house of David, now reduced to poverty and obscurity. In a house in that village were then living the lineal descendants of David, neither they nor their neighbors ignorant of their royal lineage,—for that would be impossible so long as the genealogical tables or records of the nation were extant. They had returned from the Captivity in power,—for Zerubbabel was then its head,—but had now receded from sight. Here now lived Jacob, the father of Joseph; but Joseph was not yet born. Indeed, his father was now a young man,—possibly not over thirty or thirty-five years of age. So closely, at this period of our narrative, approached the lines or boundaries of the two houses,—that of Herod and of David, who, despite the machinations of Herod, was to rule the house of Jacob and of whose kingdom there was to be no end. The mountain-range to the east was as an impervious screen between Herod and the

* The modern "Acre."

† Of Zebulon.

family of that infant King with whose birth his name was destined to be ever afterward indissolubly united. Who can cross the purposes of Jehovah?—who can mar his designs?

That dark future in Herod's history was many years off. Now Herod was glowing with youthful energy and was anxious to distinguish himself. He was by no means disposed to sit down in inactivity. He appears hardly to have entered upon the discharge of his duties, when his attention was called to a band of robbers, who, taking advantage of the looseness of the times, filled all Cœle-Syria, and to some extent ravaged Northern Galilee also. The robbers were Jews: the captain of the band, by name Hezekias, was a Jew.

The spurs of Libanus and Anti-Libanus, meeting, save a huge chasm which forms a passage for the Leontes, shut in Cœle-Syria on the south.* On all sides, except towards the north, it is begirt by the mountainous range of Libanus and Anti-Libanus. Thus shut in and surrounded, scooped out, as you may say, like a bowl, Cœle- (that is, *hollow*) Syria forms a rich plain, completely environed by mountains filled with a teeming population and thickly dotted with cities and villages. The capital of Cœle-Syria was Damascus,—which ancient city, however, as it lies at the foot of Anti-Libanus on the east, is thus partially separated from it. You had to ascend the Anti-Libanus on this side, cross it, and then descend into the garden-plain on the opposite side, before you reached Damascus, the capital of Cœle-Syria.

* Durbin's "Travels in the East," ii. 79.

Sextus Cæsar, a relation of Julius Cæsar, was proconsul of Syria. Julius Cæsar had appointed him to this office ere he left Syria for Rome after he had conquered Pharnaces, son of Mithridates.* Sextus, intent on his own pleasure, paid little regard to the complaints of the Cœle-Syrians. His neglect emboldened the robbers; and they spread devastation through that fertile district. Burning houses, wasted fields, were seen on every side.

Neglected by Sextus, whether they applied for help to Herod (he had already distinguished himself by his valor) we do not know. It is probable they did. Herod, not enervated by youthful vices like Sextus, readily obeyed the call of the Cœle-Syrians. The depredations of the robbers in Galilee also demanded his notice. The robbers had almost inaccessible retreats in the mountain-fastnesses of Anti-Libanus; but Herod ferretted them out of their dens in the holes and rocks of the mountains. Aided by the Cœle-Syrians, who acted both as guides and soldiers, the banditti were hunted by Herod like wild beasts: he pursued them from cover to cover,—from one retreat to another; he did not allow them rest day nor night; till at length, by his activity, daring, and address, he entirely extirpated the band. Hezekias, the captain, and many of his leaders were taken. As soon as he had them in his power, Herod ordered them to be executed. In a short time the country was free from them: the people breathed freely: and the praise of Herod was in every one's mouth. In

* It was after the conquest of Pharnaces that he wrote that celebrated letter to a friend in Rome, "Veni, vidi, vici,"—I came, I saw, I conquered.

the villages and cities, songs were made and sung to his praise: everywhere throughout this populous region Herod was looked upon and extolled as their champion and deliverer. The people could sleep in peace once more: their cattle, their fields, their houses, were safe. Even Sextus Cæsar did not take amiss the activity of Herod. He invited him to Damascus and formed for him a strong friendship. Thus did Herod early signalize himself.

But this act, so beneficent in itself, which saved multitudes of lives and brought entire security to a large, flourishing, and densely-settled district of country,* gave offence to the opponents of Antipater. The growing greatness of this rising family excited envy. For a number of years, two distinguished men, Malichus and Pitholaus, had acted in concert with Antipater in support of Hyrcanus. At length they divided. Pitholaus withdrew from the city, and, with a considerable body of men, joined Aristobulus after he had escaped from his prison in Rome and appeared in Judea. But Pitholaus was now dead. Malichus still remained; but, though next in authority to Antipater, he was not satisfied. He wanted the first place: he could not be content to stand next to Antipater. A strong opposition was formed, by the influence of Malichus, against Antipater. The celebrity of the sons added fresh fuel to the flame. Even Hyrcanus was inwardly disquieted by the reports that were brought to the city of Herod. Messenger after messenger arrived with news of what had taken place in

* Cœle-Syria was some fifteen miles wide, and about fifty, we think, in length. The population was very dense.

Cœle-Syria, and of the great actions and popularity of Herod. Malichus and others led Hyrcanus to think it was time to put a stop to the rapid strides the family made in public estimation; for Phasaël, the eldest son, as Governor of Jerusalem, had acquitted himself so well that his administration, as well as that of Herod in Galilee, gave general satisfaction.

Herod, in executing the robbers on his own authority, had given a handle to his enemies. This was contrary to the letter of the law. So Cicero, in the same year that Pompey took Jerusalem,* put to death Lentulus and Cethegus, with others that had been taken, in consequence of their connection with the Catiline conspiracy, without a regular trial, and afterward for that act (though he saved Rome from destruction) was, through the violence of party spirit, banished his country. Had he not fled from Rome, he would probably have lost his life. The enemies of Herod, influenced by a similarly vindictive spirit, contended that he had no right to execute even the worst of criminals without the sanction of the Sanhedrin; that the fact that Hezekias was a robber was no reason why he should be dealt with contrary to law; that Herod, for his arbitrary and violent course, deserved to lose his own life. Hyrcanus, moved partly by fear, partly by jealousy, consented to cite Herod before the Sanhedrin to answer for the crime of murder; so that, while the Cœle-Syrians were loud in their expressions of gratitude for his services, he was put on trial for his life by his own countrymen. Herod appeared before the council, and would most assuredly

* Cicero and Pompey were born in the same year.

have been put to death had he not escaped from the city. He owed his life to Hyrcanus. Sextus had written to Hyrcanus and strongly charged him to acquit Herod. The king, moved by this letter, and knowing full well that the accusation originated in malice and envy, favored the escape of Herod. Herod, highly exasperated, hastened to Damascus. Sextus Cæsar received him gladly, and soon appointed him Governor of Cœle-Syria and Samaria; for Samaria then belonged to the jurisdiction of Syria.

Shortly after, Herod, having raised an army in Cœle-Syria and Samaria, advanced against Jerusalem. He was fully resolved to wreak his vengeance on the Sanhedrin and Hyrcanus. His pride had been deeply wounded; and he felt that not only great indignity but great injustice had been heaped on him. That Hyrcanus at the last moment (owing in part, at least, to the threatening letter of Sextus Cæsar) interposed in his favor did not, in his opinion, atone for his sanction of the accusation of the Council. He included him, therefore, as well as the Sanhedrin, in his wrath. On his approach to Jerusalem, his father and elder brother Phasaël went forth from the city to meet him, counselled him to use moderation, reminded him of the former love and favors of Hyrcanus, and at length appeased his anger. Herod after this returned to Cœle-Syria.

CHAPTER III.

THE DESCENDANTS OF ZERUBBABEL.

ON the return of the Jews from their captivity in Babylon, Zerubbabel, who, as well as his father Salathiel, had been born in the land of exile, and who, by lineal descent from David, was Prince of the Jews, headed the tribes of his countrymen as they crossed the plains and deserts and rivers, wending their way back to their native land. For twenty years he watched over the house of Israel: he saw the land partly repeopled,* cities rebuilt, and at length, after long delay, the temple finished and dedicated. The last trace of Zerubbabel is his journey to Persia to inform against the Samaritans for withholding their tribute,—a certain sum the King of Persia required them to pay annually to support the Jewish worship. This occurred two years after the completion of the temple, in the eighth year of the reign of Darius, (Hystaspes.†) Never, perhaps, was tribute-money paid more reluctantly; but Zerubbabel's mission

* Forty-two thousand three hundred and sixty were all that returned at first.

† The order of succession was as follows: Darius the Mede, Cyrus, his son Cambyses, (called Ahasuerus in Scripture,) Smerdis, (the Artaxerxes of Scripture,) and Darius Hystaspes.—*Prid. Con.* i. 170. Darius the Mede reigned two years; Cyrus, seven years and five months; Smerdis the Magian, five months. Darius Hystaspes was the one who invaded Greece and was so greatly defeated on the plains of Marathon by the Greeks under Miltiades.

was successful, and they were compelled to pay it. Fifty years and more after this, first Ezra and then Nehemiah succeeded to the temporal rule of the nation; but after the expiration of their term of authority the Jewish high-priest monopolized all the authority, both temporal and religious. The house of David sunk from its high eminence; its ancient distinction was gone; the glory that hung over its bright future was not seen. Had the Jews limited the power of God? Did they suppose that Word had failed which said David would never want one of his posterity to sit on his throne? Did they think his line had become extinct? Did they suppose God was such a one as themselves, who said one thing to-day and forgot it to-morrow? All that the prophets had written concerning the future glory of the house of David,—had it no point, no vital energy? Or, dazzled by the glory of the coming Messiah, had they become purblind, and lost sight of the great fact that the Messiah was to proceed from the house of David? There was blindness somewhere, of some sort, or the Jews would not have suffered the house around which all their hopes clustered so entirely to sink from the public view.

What was the feeling of that impoverished house it were vain to inquire; but God watched over it,—as in its rise, so now in its decline. The divine energy never fails. What had been said of the posterity of the son of Jesse, in the lapse of time and by Rabbinical teaching, might now be regarded as a mere figure of speech. But could a Word so express, so specific, fail? The seed was restricted expressly to those of David's line. No words could be more express, no language

more plain. There was no ambiguity in the language. Shall it be made to say one thing and mean another? Shall we take it out of its plain, literal sense and make of it a rope of straw or a face of wax? May we pull it in any direction, or impress on it what figure or image we please? Is it thus God speaks to man, and that in regard to a subject on which not only the hope of Israel depends, but which involves the welfare of the whole human race? If God really meant what he said of the house of David, whence this apathy to this fallen, impoverished family? How did it happen that, with the eyes of the whole nation fixed upon them, they were suffered to descend so low in the vale of humble life? With the Word of God in their hand, one might readily suppose that the eyes of the entire nation, both in Judea and in every part of the earth where Jews dwelt, would have been directed with the most intent gaze upon this single family,—especially as the time drew nigh for the fulfilment of prophecy respecting the Messiah. Such was not the case. David's line was forgotten. They were neglected,—unknown,—buried in obscurity. Omnipotence is about to appear; but in what form?

God's purposes in all past time are converging to a single point: they meet here in Nazareth of Galilee. The pomp and majesty of Nebuchadnezzar,—the head of the first universal empire,—the next empire, that of Cyrus,—the overthrow of the Persian empire by Alexander the Great; and now, at the period which we have reached in our history, the near attainment of universal dominion by the Romans,—converge, like so many rays of a light, to a focus, and meet here in the house of Jacob the father of Joseph. God is collecting the thunder of

his power in this humble abode,—that thunder which is to shake the nations and before which ultimately all the kingdoms of the earth will fall. God is about to establish a universal empire on the earth, and himself is to be the King. But what is to be the seal of this? How is the new-born king to ascend his throne? Is he to take his seat on it as a hereditary monarch, or by force of arms is he to rise to greatness and power?

Whence the title of this new king? Whence the secret source of his great strength? Whence the change in that law of fluctuation which thus far, like the ebbing and flowing of the sea, has marked the rise and fall of kingdoms?*

How is it that the mark of change, of mutability, is not set on this *new* kingdom as well as on the four universal empires by which it was preceded? Whence the secret cause of this organic, fundamental change?

The answer to this is to be found in the prophecy of David, who, inspired of God, descends into the bowels of the earth and draws forth the future glory of Israel and the world from the dark precincts of the tomb. The scene of contest is to be transferred from earth to Hades,† from the living to the dead. The battle is not with “confused noise and garments rolled in blood,”‡ but the arm of God is to put on strength: the contest

* Dante thus, in a little different form, alludes to this,—to that ceaseless *hidden* cause which leaves nothing at rest:—

“Hence doth one nation rise, another fall,
Obedient to her ever-changing will
Who lies, like snake in grass, conceal’d from all.”

Inferno, Canto VII.

One of the favorite ideas of Dante was a universal empire.

† The invisible world.

‡ Isaiah ix. 5.

that is to be waged is with Death, the common and heretofore irresistible foe of man. This battle is to be "with burning and fuel of fire."*

The title of "Son," of "King,"—the claim to universal and everlasting empire,—is to be achieved in mortal conflict with Death. He who is to take the title of "the Prince of the kings of the earth"† is to draw his pedigree from a new source. He is to be the "first-begotten of the dead."‡ Prophecy, in anticipation of this victory, of this unheard-of achievement, says of the victor, "I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son: this day have I begotten thee."§ Now the Psalm is sung, "Yet have I set my king upon my holy Hill of Zion."|| Zion's king takes his place on his holy hill as "the Prince of the kings of the earth," in virtue of his achievement over Death, as "the first-begotten of the dead."

Having obtained this victory, God is represented in the same Psalm as speaking thus to the Son:—"Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Be wise, now, therefore, O ye kings; be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and

* Isa. ix. 15.

† Rev. i. 5.

‡ Ibid.

§ Paul, in his discourse in the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia, fixes indisputably the sense of this passage:—"And we declare unto you glad tidings,—how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again;" as it is also written in the Second Psalm, "Thou art my Son: this day have I begotten thee." Acts xiii. 32, 33.

|| Psalm ii. 7.

rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.”*

To David's Lord, and yet to David's Son, is also to be applied the language in the Eighty-Ninth Psalm:—“I have found David my servant; with my holy oil have I anointed him. I will set his hand also in the sea, and his right hand in the rivers. He shall cry unto me, Thou art my Father, my God, and the Rock of my salvation. Also I will make him my *first-born*,† higher than the kings of the earth. Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure forever, and *his throne* as the sun before me. *It* [the throne] shall be established forever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven.”‡

Here, then, is the secret cause of the extent, greatness, and the everlasting duration of the new kingdom. However strong kingdoms might have appeared in the past,—of whatever elements composed, of gold, silver, brass, or iron,§ as running sand,—their foundations were ever sliding away,—slowly, it may be, very slowly in some cases,—yet still, in due course of time, one by one, each in his turn, they passed away. But this new king, this “Prince of the kings of the earth,” this “Son of David,” the Lord's “Anointed,” put his hand on the hidden monster, the “snake in the grass,”|| who, seated

* Ps. ii. 8, 12. Ponder, reader, the Second Psalm.

† The reader will notice this expression “first-born” and compare it with “the first-begotten of the dead.” Also compare it with Ps. ii. 7 and Acts xiii. 33.

‡ Ps. lxxxix. 20, 25-27, 35-37.

§ Dan. ii. 36-45.

|| Dante.

in deep, dark, inaccessible caverns, exulted in desolation and fed alike daintily on the flesh of kings and the meanest of their subjects. All prey came alike to him, from that golden city, Babylon, to the meanest hovel. When some mighty capital fell, overturned in an hour, through the dark domain of Death was it said, "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! Thy pomp is brought down to the grave, and the noise of thy viols; the worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee."* But the deadly foe of kingdoms, nations, and empires, the exulting victor over poor mortality, has found One who is more than a match for him on his own ground: he who has conquered the mightiest, yea, "all the chief ones of the earth," is conquered himself at last.† Hence come glittering from the damp and noisome grave sparkles of light that will never expire,—dew-drops from the womb of the morning, that will glisten in the long sunlight of an eternal day. No mournful winds in childhood's early day will sadden the youthful spirit, the mysterious cause of sadness and strange melancholy, unpierced, unknown. That sadness, that strange, mysterious melancholy, as a pale ghost, as a dark, ominous shadow, will haunt life's paths no more. Garlands sprinkled with dewy morning's first freshness will not, ere nightfall, call up melancholy thoughts, as, withered and fragrantless, they hang down their languishing heads. No shadow evermore will lurk in the path of the bright sunbeams.

* Isa. xiv. 12.

† "Forasmuch, then, as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." Heb. ii. 14.

Amaranthine roses will bloom, and joy will always flow on in one running stream. The laurel that is hung around the spear of the new Victor will never wither; the acclaim that salutes the ascension of earth's new King to his holy hill of Zion will be re-echoed from one end of the earth to the other end.

"The hill of God is as the hill of Bashan; an high hill, as the hill of Bashan. Why leap ye, ye high hills? This is the hill which God desireth to dwell in: yea, the Lord will dwell in it forever. The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place. Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them."*

The new kingdom appears with a new lustre, shining in the light of primal time.

* Ps. lxxviii. 15, 18. "Now, that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended into the lower parts of the earth?"—Ephes. iv. 9.

Book Fifth.

CASSIUS IN JUDEA.

PROEM.

THE next actor that appeared in Judea was Cassius, the chief instigator of the murder of Julius Cæsar, and, with Brutus, most prominent in that tragedy. Driven from Rome and Italy, Brutus and Cassius set sail for Greece. At the Piræus of Athens they parted,—Cassius departing for Syria, Brutus taking possession of Greece and Macedonia. Cassius soon got together a large army,—no less than twelve legions. To support this army he levied contributions in all quarters, and, among the rest, imposed a tax of seven hundred talents on Judea. To meet this tax, which was urgent and pressing, and which Cassius exacted with severity, Antipater assigned its collection to Malichus and his two sons, Phasael and Herod. Herod at once proceeded to Galilee, and having favour with the people, and acting with his usual promptitude and decision, was the first to bring his amount to Cassius. Cassius, greatly needing the money, was highly pleased with his despatch, took Herod into favour, and did not dispossess him of the government of Cœle-Syria. Malichus not raising his proportion, Cassius was about to put him to death, and would have done so, had not Hyrcanus advanced the

money. Some of the cities of Judea having been delinquent, Cassius sold into slavery all the inhabitants, and so raised the sum they were to pay.

Cassius was celebrated in these parts for his valour and military ability; for after the defeat of Crassus he repulsed the Parthians when they invaded Syria. Cassius was quæstor or treasurer to Crassus in that fatal expedition; and, had his advice been followed, the deplorable catastrophe would have been averted. Cassius, with a small body of horse, made his escape. With this small force, and such additions as he hastily made, he repulsed the Parthians, who supposed Syria, Phœnicia, and Judea would have been an easy prey after the overthrow of Crassus. Baffled, they retired; and Cassius, though not regularly appointed, fulfilled the office of Proconsul of Syria, made vacant by the death of Crassus.

In the new civil war, which had now broken out in consequence of the murder of Julius Cæsar, his former reputation was of great use, and enabled him with little difficulty to raise an army with which, in conjunction with that of Brutus, (who had been as successful in Greece and Macedonia as Cassius in Syria,) the battle of Philippi was fought. Mark Antony and young Octavius having passed from Italy to Greece, Cassius left Syria to unite his forces with those of Brutus. They met at Smyrna for the first time since they parted at the Piræus. Then they were exiles, penniless, without support; now they were at the head of a great army, prepared to contend for the empire of the world, as Cæsar and Pompey on the plains of Pharsalia.

It was while they were yet at Sardis in Asia that

Brutus saw the spectre which Cassius, of the sect of Epicurus,* sought to convince him was but an illusion,—the play of his imagination. It was in the third watch. Brutus sat in his tent alone: the lamp burned low and dim: he was engaged reading,—doubtless some philosophical treatise. In the vast camp all was still; when a rustling of his tent was heard, and Brutus, looking up, saw a spectre of great size standing close by his side. The appearance of the spectre was “horrible and monstrous.” Unmoved by the sudden apparition, Brutus spake to it. He asked what it was,—whether a god or man,—and what was his business with him. To this the reply was, “Brutus, I am thy evil genius: I will meet thee again at Philippi.” With that it vanished; and Brutus, going out of his tent to inquire of his servants, found that they “had neither heard any noise, nor had seen any vision.”†

Through the whole of this strange interview Brutus was perfectly self-possessed. When the spectre said, “Thou wilt see me at Philippi,” Brutus calmly replied, “I’ll meet thee there.” Fortified by virtue, Brutus had nothing to fear; inspired by sincere love for his country, he sought only her good. He was free from selfish aims. Why should he fear a spectre? His country free, he gained all he sought; his country enslaved, like Cato, all that was left for him was to die. If ever any man was competent to decide upon what he

* It was in the year 310 before Christ Epicurus opened his school at Athens. He taught in a garden. He taught that the world was made by chance; that there is no God, no providence, no future state; that this world is man’s all.

† Life of M. Brutus, by Plutarch.

saw and heard, Brutus was; and his averment of the fact deserves at least as much consideration as the sophistry of Cassius. On the verge of the invisible world, possessing, as we do, immortal spirits, why should it be thought so incredible that now and then God should draw aside the thin veil that hides the invisible from our sight, and give us some view of what it hides? To suppose this is not credulity: it is what might be reasonably expected. It is in fact no more than what God has often done,—as is amply shown in the sacred annals of the Jews. If to them, why not to others also?

At Philippi in Macedonia the decisive battle was fought. Antony and Octavius were victorious; Brutus and Cassius were defeated. Brutus and Cassius fell on the same swords with which they had slain Cæsar. Thus one by one the murderers of Cæsar fell,—all (and they were over sixty*) coming to a violent death. The manner of their deaths, together with the pale lustre of the sun the year of Cæsar's death, and the withdrawal of his usual heat, so that the fruits did not ripen, were regarded as marks of the divine displeasure for so impious a deed. Virgil thus alludes to the pale light of the sun which appeared “after the assassination of Cæsar and continued so during the whole of the year:”—

“He” (the sun) “also pitied Rome at Cæsar’s death,
When he covered his bright head with murky iron hue,
And the impious age feared eternal night.”†

* Suetonius.

† Georgics, book i. toward the close.

CHAPTER I.

THE DEATH OF ANTIPATER, FATHER OF HEROD THE GREAT.

MALICHUS, the head of a powerful faction in Jerusalem which was opposed to Antipater, having failed in his designs against the son, could not rest till he had effected the death of the father. This he brought about while Cassius was yet in Asia. At a feast in the palace of Hyrcanus, having bribed the butler of the king, he gave Antipater poison mingled with his drink, of which he died. Malichus had before attempted to destroy Antipater. Aware of his design, Antipater fled from Jerusalem beyond Jordan for safety; but Malichus contrived to allay his fears. He protested in the most solemn manner his innocence, and that the suspicions of Antipater were wholly without foundation. He called upon God to bear witness to the truth of what he said; for the most solemn oath was with him but an idle word. He excelled in duplicity. He was both false and treacherous. Antipater allowed himself to be persuaded: he returned to the city; their former intimacy was renewed; and the result was his death, as we have narrated. He fell a victim to the treachery and malice of Malichus,—a man whose life he had saved; for Statius Marcus, who was sent by Julius Cæsar to succeed

Sextus as Proconsul or Governor of Syria, perceiving that he was a disorganizer and bent on mischief for the promotion of his own ambitious aims, would have put him to death, had it not been for the intercession of Antipater. In saving the life of Malichus, the father of Herod saved the life of his own murderer.

Antipater, though of Idumean descent, was by birth a Jew. A number of years before his birth the Jews and Idumeans had become one nation. The two rival nations that had struggled in the womb of Rebecca had become one, agreeably to the word of the Lord.* They had long been separated. When Israel came out of Egypt, Edom would not let the Israelites pass through their country: when they were carried into captivity, Edom rejoiced. At length the day of retribution arrived. They in their turn were driven from their ancient possessions; were glad to find shelter in the southern part of Judea; and, as we have already shown, were at length conquered by John Hyrcanus, and became one with the Jews.†

The prophecy respecting Jacob and Esau is a remarkable prophecy, and as remarkably fulfilled. Centuries intervened from the time of its utterance to its fulfilment; but as a great river through many windings makes its way to the ocean, steadily flowing onward to its destined point, so in this case. How little likelihood was there when the Jews came out of Egypt, pitching

* See book i. p. 25 of this work. In the future restoration of Israel ancient Edom, or Idumæa, now so desolate, shall form a part of the sacred possession.—Obad. 17.

† Book i. p. 24 of this work; which, if the reader will peruse, he will find the benefit of it.

their tents for forty years in the wilderness, that "the elder," Edom, or Esau, "would serve the younger," Jacob! The Edomites, or Idumeans, were then, and had long been, a flourishing nation. How little likely was it when Israel was in captivity in Babylon, doomed apparently to a hopeless captivity, Jerusalem in ruins and its temple destroyed, while Edom with its capital Petra towered in its strength, that the prophecy would be fulfilled! Yet this did take place. God to some may seem to move slowly. Men may grow weary of waiting and fall into doubt; they may smile in their incredulity; but in good time God fulfils his omnipotent, unchangeable word. Other things may fail, but not the word of God.

The father of Antipater (by some called Herod) occupied a high rank in the court and army of Alexander Jannæus; and his son Antipater was brought up with the two sons of the king, Hyrcanus and Aristobulus. He was in early life the particular friend and associate of Hyrcanus, but was disliked by Aristobulus. Aristobulus, who was bent upon obtaining the throne to the exclusion of his elder brother, saw probably in Antipater an obstacle to his designs. Hence the enmity which he felt to him. It appears, however, from our narrative,* that at this time Antipater was unable to help his friend Hyrcanus. The popularity of Aristobulus, like that of Absalom, carried all before it; and his brother was hardly seated on the throne ere he dispossessed him of it. But after a while the popularity of Aristobulus began to decline. He became rapacious

* See book i. p. 19 of this work, where this is briefly stated.

and unjust. His habits were effeminate and highly offensive, especially to the more aged and grave citizens; many grew dissatisfied with his government. Then it was that Antipater seized the favourable movement, secured a large party of the most influential citizens of Jerusalem to favour his cause, obtained the promise of aid from Aretas, King of Arabia, excited the sluggish Hyrcanus to act, and at length, after an interval of two years, through Pompey and the Romans, restored Hyrcanus to his throne; while his brother Aristobulus was carried captive, and confined in all for nearly ten years (years memorable on account of Julius Cæsar's campaigns in Gaul) in the Mamertine prison at Rome.

Whatever were the motives of Antipater in this movement,—whether he was impelled to act as he did to save his own life and that of Hyrcanus, as he alleged, or from ambition,—one thing is clear. After he had succeeded, he uniformly studied the welfare of his country. It was his policy, as we have already remarked,* to secure the friendly regard of the Romans; and various opportunities occurred for this purpose. Thus, he assisted Scaurus, whom Pompey left Governor of Syria, in his expedition against Aretas, King of Arabia. This happened shortly after the departure of Pompey from Syria. He negotiated a peace between them which was as much wished for by Scaurus as it was by Aretas. Scaurus became environed in the defiles of that region, and suffered from the want of water and provisions, which were supplied by Antipater. He assisted also Gabienus and Mark Antony in their expedition to Egypt, especially

* Book iii. p. 59.

aiding their army in their passage across the desert. Of the aid he rendered to Julius Cæsar we have already sufficiently spoken. Had he taken a different course, as Aristobulus and his sons did, treating the Romans as enemies, Judea at that time, like Syria, would have ceased to exist as an independent kingdom, and would have become a province of the Roman empire. As it was, it remained free; and at his death, amid war and change on every hand, it had attained a high degree of prosperity. The encomium of the Jewish historian upon him at his death was well merited, who says that "he distinguished himself for piety, justice, and love to his country."*

Thus died Antipater, the father of Herod the Great. Shortly after, Malichus, by order of Cassius, was himself slain for this wicked deed. This was effected through Herod, who informed Cassius of the death of his father by Malichus. Malichus, in company with Hyrcanus, Herod, his brother, and a large retinue, were journeying together to Laodicea to congratulate Cassius upon the conquest of that place. By previous arrangement, as they drew nigh to Tyre, a band of soldiers from that city, acting according to the orders of Cassius, fell suddenly upon Malichus and slew him. They seized this opportunity; for such was the power and authority of Malichus at Jerusalem, who, since the death of Antipater, had obtained the whole power of the government, that it was not easy to put him to death there. Malichus had protested to Phasael and Herod his innocence of their father's death in the strongest terms, had mani-

* Joseph. Antiq. book xiv. ch. 11.

fested great grief, and at his funeral, which was ordered with great magnificence by Herod, appeared as one of the chief mourners. Phasaël and Herod pretended to believe what he said; both parties dissembled. Thus fell one of the most powerful citizens of Jerusalem. His intention was to seize the government and dispossess Hyrcanus of his kingdom; but death suddenly interrupted his schemes. He did not long reap the fruits of his treachery and wickedness; his death soon followed that of his hated rival, Antipater. Malichus, Pitholaus, and Antipater, as it regards dignity, wealth, and power, were to Jerusalem what Pompey, Julius Cæsar, and Crassus were to Rome, and lived about the same time. They had all now passed from the stage; and new actors had taken their places, animated by the same passions and contending for the same illusive prize.

CHAPTER II.

- HEROD CROWNED KING OF JUDEA AT ROME, IN THE YEAR B.C. 37.

OUR work is like a drama. The curtain falls; the scene shifts; and new scenes and new actors appear on the stage.

We must again ask the reader to conceive of the lapse of several years, from the departure of Cassius out of

Syria to join Brutus, to the time when Herod was crowned King of the Jews at Rome. As brief a reference as possible to the events that led to this is all that our plan will admit.

Great changes had occurred in the interval. Antigonus, the younger son of Aristobulus, (Aristobulus and his eldest son Alexander were both now dead,*) having obtained the aid of the Parthians, dethroned his uncle, murdered Phasaël, and drove Herod out of Jerusalem. After the battle of Philippi, while Antony, who was now master of the East, slumbered in the arms of Cleopatra, the Parthians overran all Syria; the Romans were defeated in every direction. At this juncture, invited by Antigonus, who offered them a singular bribe,—one thousand talents and five hundred Jewish women of the first families, (meaning to seize the wives and daughters of his enemies,)—the Parthians came against Hyrcanus. By stealth, small parties of Jews, favourable to Antigonus, obtained admission into the city, till at length they seized the temple and fortified themselves there. Every day blood was shed, the party of Antigonus contending with that of Hyrcanus, sustained by Phasaël and Herod. The whole city was rent with this war. With the hope of ending the dreadful scene, Phasaël, with Hyrcanus, was induced to leave the city and seek an interview with the Parthian commander, despite the remonstrance of Herod, who to no purpose

* Julius Cæsar freed Aristobulus from prison, and sent him into the East to create a diversion in his favour; but he was taken off by poison, by the adherents of Pompey. Alexander, hastening to join his father, was taken prisoner by Piso, father-in-law of Pompey, and put to death. Thus perished in the civil wars of Pompey and Cæsar both father and son.

reminded them of the perfidy of the Parthians. They did not heed what he said; and the result was the captivity and imprisonment of Hyrcanus by the Parthians, and the death of Phasaël, elder brother of Herod. In this emergency, Herod, unable to sustain himself against the Parthians and a divided city, was compelled to flee by night for his life, accompanied by his family and a large body of partisans, amounting to some ten thousand men. He had proceeded but a few miles when he was assailed by the Parthians on one side, and Jews of the party of Antigonus on the other. Herod defeated them in every attack, especially at a spot about eight miles from Jerusalem, where he afterward built a palace called Herodium, in commemoration of his victory. On the borders of Idumea (that is, the more modern Idumea*) he met his brother Joseph coming to his relief. Disbanding here the greater part of his forces, with eight hundred chosen men he proceeded to Massada, the strongest fortress in Judea, built on the very top of one of those mountains which form the wilderness of Judea, and which overlooked the Dead Sea.† Leaving the fortress under the command of his brother Joseph, and placing in it his mother, sister, and his betrothed Mariamne, with her brother Aristobulus, and others, he set out for Petra, the place of his refuge when a child. He expected aid of Malchus, (successor of Aretas,) King of Arabia, upon whom he had conferred many favours; but Malchus sent him word not to set foot within his dominions. Repelled in this quarter, and led by his

* See book i. p. 24 of this work.

† This fortress was first built by Jonathan, brother of Judas Maccabeus, during the wars of the Jews with their Syrian oppressors.

guiding star, he determined to proceed to Rome, having learned that Antony had sailed for Italy. Skirting the shore of the Mediterranean, he arrived at Rhinocorura, travelling with great expedition. Thence he went to Pelusium; thence to the city of Alexandria in Egypt. Here Cleopatra sought in vain to induce him to engage in her service. Departing from Alexandria, he took ship for Rhodes; was shipwrecked; built a vessel at this island; in his munificence assisted the islanders, who had suffered greatly from the rapacity of Cassius; left Rhodes; arrived at Brundisium, whence by the famous Appian Way (which Horace and Virgil travelled together somewhere about this time*) he hastened to Rome, where were both Octavius Cæsar and Antony.

Herod was now in Rome—"magnificent Rome"†—for the first time.

It is a remarkable fact, and well worthy of our notice, in connection with the crowning of Herod, King of Judea, that the two chief rulers of the world, now met at Rome, were under obligations to Antipater, the father of Herod,—Antony when he was with Gabinius in Syria, and Octavius in consequence of the services rendered his great uncle, Julius Cæsar, in Egypt. Cæsar, as we have seen, owed his preservation, his life, to Antipater, and afterwards, in every way, showed his

* See Satires, b. i. 5. Horace, in this Satire, describes a journey he took from Rome to Brundisium. At Sinuessa* he was joined by Virgil, of whom he speaks in this and other places in terms of the warmest friendship. Mæcenas was one of the party.

† Horace. Ibid. Satire.

* Sinuessa, a town of Campania, at the mouth of the Liris, south of Minturna.—*Smart's Horace.*

gratitude to him and to the Jews: Antony, also, had received most material assistance in crossing the desert, when with Gabinius he restored Auletes, father of Cleopatra, to his throne. Without that assistance the expedition would have proved a failure, as the chief difficulty consisted in the passage across the desert. Herod also himself, after the battle of Philippi, when Antony first came to the East, had made a most favourable impression; so much so, that in his war with Parthia, which he contemplated, he counted on his assistance. It was the favour Antony showed him in Syria, both on his own and his father's account, which induced him to take this journey to Rome and to seek his assistance against the Parthians and Antigonus. (Antigonus in obtaining the aid of the Parthians had made himself obnoxious to the Romans. He had allied himself with their enemies; for the Romans burned to wipe off the disgraceful defeat of Crassus and to recover the eagles.*) Herod had a sad story to tell: his brother Phasaël slain; Hyrcanus carried into captivity; Antigonus raised to the throne by the Parthians, who, like a devouring flood, had overflowed Judea, Phœnicia, Syria; and himself driven from his home, from his native city, with all that were most dear to him, and forced to seek safety in flight. Even Massada, the only fortress in the land which he held, was closely besieged at that very time by the forces of Antigonus. In this emergency, which concerned the honour of Rome as well as himself, he had none to look to but Antony.

* They were recovered by Octavius when, under the name of Cæsar Augustus, he ruled the whole Roman empire, many years after this period.—*Suetonius's Lives of the Cæsars.*

Antony espoused his interest, introduced him to Augustus, and both, for the reasons mentioned, brought his case before the Senate. (This was a mere form, for their word was law.) As Judea had now no king, Herod intended to have asked that high office for Aristobulus, the brother of Mariamne, his espoused wife; but Antony, deeming Herod a more suitable person than a mere boy, as Aristobulus was, proposed to Herod to be king himself. He himself, before the Senate, said that Herod as king would be able to render him effective service in the Parthian war, and that therefore it was to the interest of the Romans to make him king. In Herod he would have an able ally; whereas Antigonus, his brother, and his father, had always been opposed to the Romans. Influenced by these considerations, by the joint favour and recommendation of Octavius Cæsar and Antony, the Roman Senate, by a unanimous vote, decreed to Herod the throne of Judea. Departing from their usual policy, they went out of the line of the royal family, and elected a new man to be king,—one, however, who was allied by marriage to the Asamonean family. The proposal to make Herod King of the Jews originated with Mark Antony. The virtue of Herod was not proof against the seduction. On the day the decree was passed, accompanied by Octavius and Antony, Herod, walking between the two, the consuls and other officers going before, Herod was conducted to the Capitol and crowned King of the Jews. He supped that night with Mark Antony; when, making haste, he left Rome, having spent but seven days in the city. He travelled with great expedition to Brundisium; embarked here on board of a vessel for Ptolemais; and,

favoured by a prosperous breeze, soon reached that port, having been absent but three months.

His arrival was very opportune. Ventidius, the lieutenant of Antony, in two battles had already defeated the Parthians and completely driven them out of Syria and Judea. Herod had only Antigonus to contend with. Soldiers flocked to his standard from every quarter. Galilee almost to a man joined him; Samaria came to his assistance; but, owing to various causes, the war was protracted two or three years. One of these causes was, the Roman generals ordered by Antony to assist Herod played a double part. Receiving bribes from Antigonus, they took good care not to push him too hard, causing the war to drag its slow length along. At length, joined by Sosius, whom Antony strictly charged to bring the war to a speedy conclusion, with several legions, besides the large force of Jews who from various motives sided with Herod, Jerusalem was taken, and Antigonus sent prisoner to Antony. By the capture of Jerusalem Herod became undivided master of the whole land; and, having just before the close of the siege concluded his marriage with Mariamne, (they had been espoused four years,) took up his abode with his young and beautiful bride in the palace of the Maccabees. The last of Judea's kings had now ascended the throne, previously to the birth of its true and rightful king, a son of David's line,—the Prince of Peace, the Messiah, the Promised Seed. Herod did but hold the throne and prepare the way for another, the greatest of the kings of the earth.

CHAPTER III.

SHEPHERD-LIFE IN JUDEA.

It is not so much in the palace of its kings, in strifes for power, in the zeal of partisanship,—fiery, hot, revengeful,—we are to look for the true life of this remarkable people, the Jews, but among, for the most part, those who, inspired by better hopes, remain little and unknown, hid in a corner, nourishing the expectation of a day of peace and love, of truth and holiness, by the study of their holy oracles. While Judea was rocked like a vessel at sea, first by one commotion, then by another,—now ruled by this one, now by that, to-day this party in the ascendant, to-morrow that,—there were not a few who, like Anna and Simeon,—like the obscure descendants of the house of David,—read the Scriptures, pondered on them, and waited in strong hope and lively faith for their fulfilment. They did not go to the schools of the great Rabbinical doctors to learn them, but, looking for light to the infinite Source of truth and knowledge, they saw in them an illumination revealed only to the simple and pure in heart. These readers, contemplative, sincere, childlike, were found in every part of the land,—in Galilee, in the cities on the shore of the Lake of Capernaum, as well as in Judea and Jeru-

salem; and, among others of the poorer, humbler class, they were found among the shepherds who led their flocks through the green pastures and by the side of the still waters of this favoured land. Tending their flocks, sitting on the bank of the murmuring brook, reclining at noontide under the shade of some spreading tree, they read the Law, the Psalms, (the sweetest of Israel's singers, once a shepherd like themselves,) the Prophets, and, taught of God, saw that ONE of David's line was yet to arise and to sit on his throne, and to raise the nation to a point of unequalled grandeur and power.

Out of this class we will select a single instance. Our sketch has its foundation in reality; for something similar to what we describe must have taken place to prepare the pious shepherds of Bethlehem to bear testimony to the birth of Christ the Lord. Not at once, without previous preparation, did the angelic scene break upon them; but years of training, of holy meditation, and devout reading of the Scriptures, had gradually prepared them for that hour. Though shepherds, of humble birth and obscure lives, yet were they intelligent witnesses. They had deeply meditated on the truth of God, and had received divine illumination. They were taught by the Holy Spirit.

* * * * *

We date our home-scene some thirty-three or thirty-four years before the birth of Christ,—about the time that Herod began to rule in Jerusalem. This entire space—this period of thirty years and more, beginning with their birth, or at least early childhood—we suppose was necessary to prepare the shepherds of Bethlehem for

the great ANGELIC ANNOUNCEMENT. The scene we place in the vicinity of Bethlehem, long before designated as the birthplace of Israel's King.

. We are in a large, square room. A lamp burns on the floor, in a recess of the room: the wick is small; the tube of the lamp not much larger than a good-sized darning-needle, so that just a twinkle of light may shine. On a bed, nearly opposite the lamp that burns with so dim a light, lay a rosy-cheeked boy, with curly locks, scarcely three or four years of age, softly reclining, his head gently laid on a pillow or cushion, listening to a holy evening song, sung by an elder sister, who, little thinking of the impression she produced, was solicitous to lull him asleep. The holy song charmed the little fellow: it stole into his heart, and suffused his eyes with a dewy moisture. The song or chant was after this wise:—

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this.”*

. The time, the hour, the stillness, the pale glimmer of the lamp in the recess of the room, the melody of that dear sister's voice,—a sister always fondly loved even to life's latest hour,—the words themselves, so signifi-

* Isa. ix. 6, 7.

cant, of such amazing import, (though of course not then comprehended,) all combined to produce an impression which never left the child. Undoubtedly, then the Holy Spirit shone upon his mind; and thoughts of God and of his Christ came with those words which were never effaced. The birth of the wonderful child, as seed sown in the ground, was dropped in that young heart in that hour,—seed that long lay dormant, but at last sprung up and produced fruit. The lamp burned lower and dimmer; the twinkling light sank to a spark. One or two glimpses more of the glimmering light those closing eyes saw, and then they shut; and, wholly unconscious, that little head, with its wavy curls, sank on the soft cushion. The elder sister, who had sung these great words, drew softly to the bedside, imprinted a sweet kiss on that rosy cheek, and with silent footsteps left the room.

The next day broke as any other day; but a new creation had commenced in that young child who fell asleep so sweetly the night before. From this point began his thoughts of Christ,—of the Messiah. In reading the Scriptures, this was the point from which he started and to which he invariably returned. This wonderful child, who was to be King of Israel and to rule all nations, to whose sway the whole world was ultimately to submit, of the increase of whose government and peace there was to be no end, who was to descend from David and to sit upon his throne, who was to rule the kingdom of David and establish it with justice and judgment from henceforth even forever,—*

* Isa. ix. 7.

this was ever the theme of his thoughts, the subject of his studies. By little and little he learned of this new King and new Kingdom. Much was dark; but some things were clear. It was easy to ascertain the extent of his dominion, the power of his government, the greatness of his name; this was as plain as the sun in the heavens; but *how* he was to reach this height of excellency and rule the nations,—this was hid as behind a veil. Who was this child *in fact* who was to be born of a virgin, (so unheard-of birth,) to whom were attached titles—names descriptive of character—which belonged only to the great God?

He was to be great. This could not be disguised. Greater than the greatest; mightier than the mightiest. What might equal to his? what power like his? But there were statements, also, dark, inexplicable. There were words applied to this person that spake of ignominy, of contempt, of scorn. How could this be? How reconcile so much glory with so much meanness, such power with such weakness? Then the cup of sorrow of which, agreeably to the words of the prophets, he was to drink. What did this mean? How was sorrow to mingle in so large a measure in the cup of one who was to bestow so great felicity upon his chosen people? The boy shepherd, as he advanced to the years of manhood,—as his understanding opened and enlarged, as his knowledge of the Scriptures increased,—pondered on these things, and laid them up carefully in his heart. Few saw the apparent discrepancy in the two accounts or representations as he saw them; few sympathized with him in them. Nearly all with whom he conversed saw but the glorious future of the nation. They did

not with him descend into the low vale by which the dazzling eminence beyond it was to be reached. God's plan was his own: it had no counterpart; it stood by itself. God had taken counsel with none.* His purpose, too deep for man to explore, arose from the depths of his own infinite mind. Our humble, pious shepherd, taught to revere the Word of God, to stay himself upon it, waited with patience for a more perfect explication of Holy Scripture.

At the yearly festivals which the pious shepherd of Bethlehem attended at Jerusalem, we may suppose, in time he formed an acquaintance with Anna, daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser, (or Asher,†) the prophetess. Over fifty years had she now watched in the temple day and night, inspired of the Holy Ghost to speak of the promised day of Israel. The shepherd listened to her heaven-taught words; he received instruction, as Simeon and many others had done, from her lips. Thus was slowly prepared in obscurity the faith of one of those shepherds of the plain of Bethlehem which, when the time arrived, fitted him to be a competent witness to the birth of Christ, and to spread abroad the glad tidings throughout the district of country where the great event occurred. (One example will serve as a pattern or copy of the rest.

* Isa. xl. 13, 14.

† See book ii. ch. 1, p. 40 of this work.

Book Sixth.

ANTONY THE TRIUMVIR IN THE EAST.

PROEM.

AFTER the battle of Philippi, which was gained chiefly by Antony, (Octavius being sick at the time and confined to his bed in his tent,) the East, from the Adriatic, fell to Antony. He made his appearance first at Athens, where he spent some little time attending the schools and discussing questions of philosophy. But when he passed from Greece to Asia, any good resolves he may have formed soon vanished, and he thought of little else during the remainder of his life but his own pleasure. Antony was now the rising sun of the East, as Pompey had been a few years before, and all hastened to pay their court to him. When he entered Ephesus, it was amidst bacchanalian festivity. Ivy, the emblem of Bacchus, was carried in the festive procession, and with instruments of music the praise of Antony as Bacchus was sung. Gayety was carried to excess and wild hilarity. The mad freaks of the Bacchanals marked the conqueror's entrance into the chief city of Asia Minor. When he came to Tarsus in Cilicia, he sent for Cleopatra, under the pretence that she had favoured Brutus and Cassius. She came in a barge, slowly sailing down the river Cydnus, the silver oars of the mag-

nificent galley keeping time to the flutes and pipes that were played. Under a golden canopy Cleopatra reclined, fanned by boys attired and painted as Cupids. The shore of the Cydnus was thickly crowded with spectators. The precious incense that was burned on the deck of the vessel made fragrant each bank, and sent its perfume among the assembled crowds. At length the vessel, with its purple sails and golden prow, reached Tarsus, and Antony and Cleopatra met for the first time. In such smiling guise came ruin and dishonour to Antony, in the shape of a bad but most fascinating woman. Antony took the siren to his bosom. Already she had an evil name linked with that of Julius Cæsar. She was first carried to Julius Cæsar wrapped up in a bundle of carpet; for in no other way could she obtain admittance to the palace, as the forces of her brother completely surrounded Alexandria. She came in a boat to the palace, which was situated on the edge of the water, directly in a range with the celebrated tower or light-house Pharos. When the bundle of carpet was unrolled, she suddenly started up before Cæsar. Then began her career, and an evil name attached to her from that day; but in connection with Antony was it to be sounded forth to all the world. Cleopatra accompanied Antony to Tyre. There she left him; but Antony soon followed her to Alexandria in Egypt, where, sunk in pleasure, he forgot every thing else,—honour, duty, interest.

This was the time (Antony in Alexandria, wholly regardless of the interests of that part of the empire which he ruled) that the Parthians conquered and overran the whole of Syria, dethroned Hyrcanus, and put

Antigonus in his place as King of Judea. This was the period when Herod was obliged to flee for his life from Jerusalem, and afterwards came to Rome, saw Antony, and was made king.

A few words will explain Antony's appearance at Rome at this crisis, as it would seem, in the history of Herod.

The success of the Parthians, not only in Syria, but Asia Minor, the entire defeat of the lieutenants of Antony, and unfavourable news from Rome, aroused Antony from his inglorious slumber: he broke away from Cleopatra and sailed to Tyre. Letters from his wife Fulvia which he received induced him to proceed to Rome; but while on his voyage his wife died. This opened the way for a reconciliation between him and Octavius, by the marriage of Antony to the virtuous and discreet Octavia, half-sister of Octavius. Octavius was most tenderly attached to this sister. The marriage was consummated at Rome; and it was at this peculiarly auspicious moment, when harmony had been restored, and Antony and Octavius were on the best terms, that Herod, driven, as it would seem, by a train of adverse events, happily arrived at Rome. Of the important result of this visit we have already spoken, and of the circumstances which led to the election of Herod as King of Judea.*

Antony, after a short time spent in Rome, returned first to Greece, then to Asia. For a while the spell of Cleopatra was broken, but only to be afterwards renewed with a more potent, deadly power. Having returned to

* See book v. ch. 2, p. 109 of this work.

Asia, Antony, as he had made Herod king, assisted him, as we have seen, against Antigonus; and as Hyrcanus was reinstated on the Jewish throne by Pompey, so was Herod placed on the same throne by Antony. In both cases Roman soldiers lent their aid. The Asamonean dynasty ended with Antigonus, who was put to death by Mark Antony as a common criminal. He was first scourged, and then beheaded with the axe of the lictors. From the time of Judas Maccabeus, that heroic man, to the deposition of Antigonus, (who reigned two years,) the government of the Asamoneans lasted one hundred and twenty-nine years, when it was succeeded by the Herodian dynasty. Neither belonged to the line of the house of David; both arose from the exigencies of the times.

CHAPTER I.

HEROD KING IN JERUSALEM.

THE capture of Jerusalem placed Herod fully and fairly on the throne. He was at this time thirty-seven years of age,—the age that Solomon ascended the same throne upon the death of his father David.

Not long before the capture of the city he had consummated his marriage with Mariamne. She had been betrothed to him for four years; but such had been the difficulties of his position that the marriage had been

deferred until now. She was the most beautiful woman of the time. She possessed also a grace and fascination of manner that was captivating in the highest degree. Her intellectual accomplishments also placed her at the head of her countrywomen. Herod's love for her became very great: it amounted to passion. He could hardly live out of her sight. Still, such was the energy of his character, such his ambition, his love of fame, glory, power, that he did not allow his love to interfere with his earnest devotion to the new duties of his high and kingly station.

Herod's heart beat high when with his young and beautiful bride, (he had put away his first wife Doris, by whom he had a son, named Antipater, after his father,) amid the congratulations of his friends and the plaudits of the people, he took possession of the ancient palace of the Maccabees. The city rang with his name on that day; for the many hailed with joy his accession to the throne and looked forward to a long and prosperous reign.

When he ascended the marble steps which led from the temple to the palace, crossing the deep and narrow ravine which separated the one from the other, what thoughts must have filled his mind! On more than one occasion in his already checkered life Herod had been led to see and acknowledge the guiding hand of God. Once, in the city of Jericho, after a brilliant entertainment in which he had feasted great numbers of his friends, hardly had they left the large and magnificent hall in which the princely banquet had been held—scarcely had the lights been put out and the sound of the last footstep died away in the now silent and de-

serted apartment—when with one tremendous crash the whole fell in, pillars and roof blended in promiscuous ruin. The impression made by this event was such—the escape of Herod was so narrow, the danger so imminent, the deliverance so great—that the people generally saw in it the hand of God, and looked upon Herod as under the especial protection of heaven. At another time, during the war against Antigonus, when Herod went to join Antony, who was then engaged in the siege of Samosata, he left his forces in Judea, under the command of his brother Joseph, with the most express directions not to run the risk of a battle during his absence. Joseph, disregarding the advice of his brother, zealous to distinguish himself, engaged the enemy, was completely defeated, and slain. As Herod was on his return from Samosata, where he had materially aided Antony and for his valour and conduct been greatly honoured by him, (this was after the marriage of Antony to Octavia, sister of Octavius, and his return from Rome,) he was so forewarned in his sleep of the death of his brother that when the news came he was fully prepared for it: it was no more than he expected. So, now, as he ascended the marble steps of his palace, with a diadem on his brow, what thoughts, what remembrances, came rushing through his mind! The past came back,—the years of the past,—from early childhood and youth until now. All the associations around were familiar,—garden, palace, temple, city, and all belonging to them; but did not his eye glance in particular back on that hour?—did it not reproduce the pictured scene when, as he was proceeding to school, he was told by Menahem, of the sect of the Essenes, of the high destiny which

Herod, ever afterward, not only looked on Menahem with a sort of awe, but held in highest veneration the whole sect, looking upon them as almost beyond mortal men.

CHAPTER III.

HEROD AND HIS FAMILY.

A NEW family had taken possession of the palace of the Maccabees: the old owners and occupants had mostly passed away. Their halls, their ancient seats, were occupied by others; their treasures, their "pleasant pictures,"* had passed into the hands of strangers.

The builder and first occupant of the palace was Simon.† His son, John Hyrcanus, greatly enlarged and improved it during his long and prosperous reign; yet even in the time of Simon it was a lordly mansion. When the Greek Syrian king Antiochus Sidetes (139 before Christ) sent his ambassador Athenobius to Simon to demand the repossession of the fortress of Jerusalem and other places of importance, as Joppa and Gazara, Athenobius was greatly surprised, and, indeed,

thee," (at the same time showing him,)—"all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them,"—"if thou wilt fall down and worship me."—Matt. iv. 8, 9.

* Isa. ii. 16.

† Book iii. p. 51 of this work, where the reader will also find a description of the palace.

indignant, at the magnificence with which Simon was served, and the dazzling display of gold and silver plate which adorned the sideboards.* After Simon came his son and successor John Hyrcanus. For twenty-nine years, as king in Jerusalem, this was his home. Alexander Jannæus followed; then his widow Alexandra. After the death of Alexandra, (it was toward the close of her reign that the Romans under Lucullus compelled Mithridates to flee to Armenia and take refuge in the dominions of his son-in-law Tigranes,) (before Christ 71,) her sons Hyrcanus and Aristobulus alternately occupied it,—Aristobulus six years, Hyrcanus, after his restoration by Pompey until he was carried into captivity by the Parthians, twenty-four years. Now a new possessor—Herod—was its owner and occupant.

A hundred years had passed away since its erection. In that time it had its history,—some of it dark and tragical. Of Simon, its first builder, we are told that he was murdered by his own son-in-law. Simon, with his two eldest sons, Judas and Mattathias, were on a visit to Jericho, of which this son was governor. Instigated by ambition, hoping to succeed his father-in-law on the throne, he murdered him, with his two sons, at a feast. While they ate and drank together, a band of soldiers, concealed in the apartment, fell suddenly upon them and put them to death,—Simon, Judas, and Mattathias. John Hyrcanus, the third and youngest son, was not present, and so escaped. This son-in-law, whose name was Ptolemy, failed in his designs; for Hyrcanus,

* 1 Maccab. 38, 39.

having been informed of what happened, defended himself against the party sent to slay him, got possession first of Jerusalem, and shut the gates of the city against him. Baffled, Ptolemy was compelled to retire, and so lost the throne and kingdom for which he had perpetrated such horrible crimes.*

Another dreadful scene was connected with the history of the palace. John Hyrcanus, at his death, left the kingdom to his wife during her life; but his eldest son, Aristobulus, angered at his father's will, rose in rebellion against his mother, seized her and put her into prison. Here, with a cruelty scarcely credible, the inhuman monster suffered her to pine away, dying a lingering and most painful death by starvation. What scenes of horror do the annals of time present! Next, as we have already said, he murdered his own brother Antigonus. The scene of the murder, the reader will recollect, was the subterranean passage which led from the temple to the palace. Pierced with many wounds, the unhappy youth died, his blood marking the fatal spot. This act of Aristobulus admits, however, of some alleviation, as he was imposed upon by his own wife. While he was sick on his bed, confined to his room, she represented to him that Antigonus, in full armor, surrounded by his soldiers, and hailed in the great court of the temple by the people with joyful acclamations, was conspiring against his authority. Seized with envy and fear, he sent word to Antigonus to come to his chamber unarmed. If he did this, the soldiers were instructed not to touch him; but if he came armed he was

* 1 Maccab. xvi. 14-22.

to be slain. The wife of Aristobulus, aware of the nature of the message, bribed the messenger to say that his brother wished him to come, armed as he was, without the least delay. Antigonus, who at the time was engaged in the worship of God in the Temple, returning thanks for his victory and safe return, at once left the courts of the Lord's house for the palace, taking the secret passage. The soldiers, hid away in the darkest part of it, (which was directly under Stratos Tower,) hearing the ringing of his armor, and perceiving that he was armed with sword and buckler, suddenly fell upon and slew the unhappy Antigonus.*

An awful scene was witnessed from the windows of this palace. It occurred in the reign of Alexander Jannæus. A civil war had raged for six years between the king and his subjects. The Pharisees were the leaders in this war. Persecuted by this king, banished, imprisoned, put to death, their property confiscated, they at length rose in rebellion, carrying along with them, by their great popularity and religious influence, the majority of the people. Though often defeated, they could not be put down: their spirit was unconquerable. At length this domestic war was ended by a terrible tragedy. There fell into the power of Alexander, by the capture of the city Bethome, some eight hundred of the principal men of his enemies: these he brought to Jerusalem; and while he with his concubines feasted,

* This Aristobulus was the first of the Asamonean family that put a crown on his head, just four hundred and thirty-one years and three months after the return of the Jews from Babylon to their own land. He reigned but one year,—dying at the close of it amid all the horrors of a guilty conscience. Joseph. *Antiq.* book xiii. ch. 12, sections 2, 3.

the whole were crucified before their eyes. But this was not enough. The wives and children of these unhappy men were brought forth and put to death before their dying eyes. What a scene of blood! and this either *on* or in sight of Zion's holy hill! Savage as the act was, (he was called Thracian from it,) only thus was the war terminated. Consternation seized the survivors, and they fled in various directions,—concealing themselves during the remainder of Alexander's reign. Hardly ever did the sun look on such a deed.*

Another circumstance, of no ordinary interest, associated with the weather-beaten walls of the ancient castle, was the death of Queen Alexandra. The aged queen, by the dying advice of her husband, had reconciled herself to the Pharisees, by agreeing to govern under their direction. Glad to recover their wonted authority and influence under the government, they rallied round the queen, who at once became popular with the nation. But no sooner had the Pharisees become fully established than they began to persecute in their turn. They demanded the lives of the confidential advisers of her husband,—and that with such pertinacity, with such a spirit of blood-thirsty revenge, and with so little regard to the feelings of the queen, that, however reluctantly, she was compelled to yield. The first victim was Diogenes, the chief friend and counsellor of the late king; others followed,—till it was

* It was in the eighteenth year of the reign of this king, and in the year 84 before Christ, that Anna, having been left a widow, devoted herself wholly to the service of God from this eventful period till the birth of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, looking for the promised day of Israel, the world's second birth-day. Prid. Con. Part 2, A.D. 88.

soon apparent that the Pharisees meant to wreak their vengeance on all the principal adherents of Alexander.

While the whole city was excited with these proceedings, two years before the queen's death,—the year of the birth of Herod, (in the year 72 before Christ,)—the queen, to arrange the matter,—to save her husband's friends,—intrusted to them nearly all her strong fortresses. Fleeing to these, they escaped the death that awaited them, and the Pharisees lost their prey.

At length the time drew nigh for the queen to die. Aristobulus, who had looked forward to this time with eager anticipation, regardless of his dying mother, with a single attendant fled the city by night. The party of his father, that had possession of these fortresses, was also his party: he hastened to them, and in a few days all these strongholds were in his possession. Thus, while his mother lay dying, he was preparing to dispute the throne with his brother Hyrcanus.

Under these circumstances, the Pharisees came to the queen. They told her of the success of Aristobulus and of his designs. But the shades of death were on the queen: the crown she had coveted so eagerly was passing out of her hands; the power she had loved so much she was about losing; and the pageant that had charmed, charmed no more. She told them they must manage for themselves. They had money, an army; while the country was in a high degree of prosperity: as for herself, the world and its concerns had passed away. Even while she was speaking her strength failed, and soon the aged queen was no more.

Last scene of all connected with the palace, we have the discords of the brothers, Hyrcanus and Aristobulus,

or, rather, the troubles springing out of the ambition of Aristobulus. Hardly was the mother's head laid in the grave when Hyrcanus was called upon to defend his throne against Aristobulus, his younger brother. Defeated, in the court of the Temple he resigned his crown to his brother in the presence of all the people. Afterwards, aided by Aretas, King of Arabia, with a large army, he in his turn defeats his brother, drives him and his followers into the Temple, and besieges him there.

During the siege occurred two events which showed in what a spirit this war was conducted, and how Jew contended with Jew. Aristobulus, shut up in the Temple, wanted beasts for sacrifice: Hyrcanus's party agreed to supply him on the payment of a large sum of money for each beast; but when the money was let down from the walls they kept the money and the cattle for sacrifices. How unprincipled was such conduct! and what impiety did it show!

Another atrocious act was committed at the same time by the Jews of the party of Hyrcanus.

With a blind and infuriated fanaticism, they forced Onias to their camp. They supposed that as his prayers had been so successful in the time of drought and had brought rain down from heaven, they would be equally efficacious against their enemies,—as they called their brethren of the party of Aristobulus. In vain they urged Onias to pray to God to destroy those within the Temple. The refusal enraged them not a little: they clamored against him; they threatened his life. At length, thus pressingly urged, Onias put up this prayer:—

“O thou God of the universe, King of the whole

earth, since those that are with me are thy people, and those that are besieged are thy people also, I pray thee to hear not the prayers which these offer against their brethren, or to send those judgments which they desire."

Hardly had he spoken these words when the people fell upon Onias with the greatest fury and violence and instantly stoned him to death.*

The reader will remember that in the end this family quarrel was adjusted by Pompey, who restored Hyrcanus to the throne, carrying Aristobulus and his two sons Alexander and Antigonus as prisoners with him from Syria.†

A new owner has now, as we have seen, possession of the palace. Neither Hyrcanus nor Aristobulus, go in and out any more: one is in captivity, the other is dead. He who cared so little for his mother in her last hour, after spending more years in a prison than a palace, vainly sighing for his native land, at length dies a violent death. As for his two sons, as the reader already knows, Alexander and Antigonus, they also fell by violence. They both lifted up the arm of rebellion against their uncle Hyrcanus; while, as for Antigonus, he actually dethroned him and sold him into captivity among the Parthians. Nevertheless we find some representatives of the old family in the palace. The wife of Alexander, daughter of Hyrcanus and

* Joseph. Antiq. book xiv. ch. 2, sect. 1. There does not appear to have been much choice as to either side,—the two parties into which the nation was divided following one or other of the brothers from motives mostly of worldly policy, honor, gain, or political preferment: the glory of God had little to do with their preferences or partialities.

† Book ii. ch. 1, p. 34 of this work.

mother of Mariamne, is here. By the marriage of her daughter with Herod she is now an inmate of the home in which her girlhood was passed. Then there is the youthful Aristobulus, brother of Mariamne, destined to an early and an unhappy end. Here, too, is Mariamne, wife of Herod, adorning by her presence hall and banqueting-room. But there are strangers here. The mother of Herod, Cypros, has become a resident of the palace,—also Salome, his only sister, and Pheroras; his youngest and only surviving brother. Here are new faces, new names; here is a new family. But the old stock and new did not readily blend. The Asamonean spirit was too high to stoop to those who were not of the same princely line as themselves. Alexandra, the mother-in-law of Herod, on the one side, and Salome, his sister, on the other, by the acrimony of their tempers were soon in open hostility, engendering bitterness, strife, family disunion, where Herod, tenderly attached to his wife, had hoped to find union and peace. These were at first specks in a sunny sky; but they soon grew to black clouds, surcharged with desolation and death, involving ultimately the fate of the beautiful Mariamne herself.

There were children also in the palace,—little children. There were Alexander and Aristobulus,—named, no doubt, at the request of Mariamne, after members of her family,—sons of Herod and Mariamne. There was also after a time yet another son, (who died in Rome, in the palace of Cæsar Augustus, while pursuing his education in that city,) and two of his sister's daughters.

The happy voices of children, therefore, sounded once more in the ample garden of the palace, as aforetime.

Not only the children of Herod met here, but those of his brothers and sister. In happy amity they met now, these cousins, these youthful relatives. They were pleased in each other's society, and playmates together. Herod and Mariamne, seated side by side, could hear their voices, see their gambols, and find their own happiness enhanced by the sport, the pastime, of the group of children around them.

Perhaps Herod thought, as he gazed on Mariamne, as he looked at his little sons, as he surveyed the scene, that his cup was full. We might imagine him and Mariamne thus sitting, of a summer evening, in the garden of the palace, on some rustic seat, as the moon came shining over high walls and turret down into the great open area of the castle, pleased with the sound of youthful voices, surrounded by friends and relatives, and promising themselves, in connection with their children, much of earthly good. Well for both of them that they did not see into the dark future,—or, rather, well for them if they had been led by their numerous earthly blessings to look to and to love the Author of all their felicity. Then no harm would ever have come nigh their dwelling; or, if sorrow had entered, it would but have purified their hearts, and in the crucible of faith they would have come out pure gold.

We have not spoken of the betrothal of Herod and Mariamne. In this chapter, relating mostly to family details, with incidents of Maccabæan history, it may not be amiss to say a word concerning this.

The betrothal took place shortly after the departure of Cassius from Syria to join Brutus,—about the time of the battle of Philippi. Hardly had Cassius left

Syria when disturbances broke out anew in the city of Jerusalem. Phasael (Phasaelus) at the time was Governor of Jerusalem; but Cassius had left a small body of Roman soldiers in it, under the care of Felix, to assist Phasael in case of any civil commotion or disturbance. Felix, bribed by some potent men, friends of Malichus, and in revenge for his death, the moment Cassius had left, joined them against Phasael. Hyrcanus the king, also, was prevailed upon to favor that side. The friends of Malichus, thus strengthened, attempted to wrest the government from Phasael; but, though Herod was absent at the time, (he was lying sick at Damascus,) his brother sustained himself alone, drove Felix into one of the fortresses of the city, and compelled him to sue for peace. Phasael on this occasion found much fault with Hyrcanus for assisting his enemies, reminding him of his father's services. Hyrcanus could say but little; but, it would seem, by way of cementing anew their friendship, he suggested a marriage between Herod and his grand-daughter Mariamne. When Herod arrived he gladly embraced the offer; and, as divorce was nearly if not quite as common at this time among the Jews as among the Romans, Herod did not hesitate to dismiss Doris, by whom he had already a son, (Antipater, named after his father,) and to ally himself with the first family in the land. In a political point of view it presented the most flattering inducements; and Herod was at first probably more governed by this consideration than any other.* Such was the origin, such the history, of the betrothal of Herod and the ill-fated Mariamne.

* Thus, Cæsar Augustus, upon the death of his son-in-law Agrippa, compelled Tiberius, his step-son, to marry his daughter Julia, the widow of

CHAPTER IV.

HEROD AND THE SANHEDRIN.

IN our last chapter we spoke of "Herod and his family." We wished the reader to have in his "mind's eye" something of a sketch of Herod in his family relations and connections when he became king in Jerusalem. A darker picture is now to be drawn, but none the less necessary for a faithful portraiture of our subject.

The members of the Sanhedrin were among the most formidable opponents, the most virulent enemies, of Herod. When Jerusalem was besieged by Herod, their voices were loudest against any surrender: they were the staunchest friends of Antigonus,—not so much because of their love to Antigonus as of their hatred to Herod. They had a short time before taken sides with Malichus: now they embraced the cause of Antigonus, because it was to his interest to fight against Herod; his success depended on the other's discomfiture. When the city was in great distress on account of the siege, and, in consequence of the distress, the great

this favorite Agrippa. Reluctantly as Tiberius did this, the inducement held out by Augustus of the empire at his death led him to comply. Bad as he afterward became,—one of the worst tyrants of history,—he was deeply attached to his wife, and separated from her with profound sorrow.

body of the citizens wished to surrender, they opposed the general wish, and insisted that God would, for his great Name's sake, preserve the city and the Temple. But when the city was taken by assault, their hopes were swept away like a spider's web, and they, because they had kept up the spirit of resistance to the last and brought woes upon the city which it would not otherwise have suffered, and because of their opposition to Herod and his government, were made to feel all the weight of his indignation.

The Sanhedrin was composed principally of the sect of the Pharisees, of the most learned and eminent men of that sect,—to wit, of the scribes.* These had usurped Moses' seat, and dealt out the law as from Sinai; but they had made one great mistake,—they had substituted a something for religion which was not religion. They imagined religion was something in itself very great; whereas it is something very little. They thought it consisted in *doing* great things: they did not know it consisted more in what a man *was* than in what he did,—a mistake that is as common and fatal this day as it was then. To *do* some great thing, to abound in activity,—this, they thought, was religion. What shall we *do* to work the works of God?—this was the cry. Religious zeal, they verily supposed, was religion. To die, for instance, for the Temple, they conceived to be an act in the highest degree acceptable to God. To spread the Jewish religion, to incur danger, to endure unparalleled

* Called also "lawyers." Compare Matt. xxii. 35 with Mark xii. 28, where the same person who in Matthew is called a lawyer is in Mark said to be one of the scribes. Prid. Con. part 2, p. 224.

hardships and privations, to brave the dangers of the sea, to penetrate unknown regions, to compass sea and land, in their zeal to make proselytes,*—this they considered to be religion. The names of such were in every one's mouth, and they were extolled to the sky. To be very charitable,—this, they thought, was religion, not discriminating between the fruit and the tree, the cause and the effect. Good deeds, charitable acts, were sounded far and wide, as with a trumpet voice; and if those who were thus celebrated died, none doubted that they went to God in an odor of sanctity and were eternally at rest. They did not seem to know, so blind were they, that all this might be done, and those who acted thus be as far from religion as heaven is from hell. The great point overlooked by the Pharisees was that religion—and by this is meant here *the faith* of the Old Testament, without reference to the New—consists not so much by any means in what a man *does* as in what he *is*. Simple as this is, many see it not. Give them something *to do*, and they can be as religious as any one; but require them *to be* just what God would have them to be,—holy in heart and blameless in life,—and they shrink back. This was the case with the Pharisees: so that, though they had a magnificent outward religion,—a religion that pleased and attracted the multitude,—it was all a show and gilded pageant; like an unearthed corpse, it had the full outline and perfect proportions of the once living man, but let a breath of air touch it, and it would perish and vanish away.

* Persons converted from Gentilism to Judaism were called proselytes, either "of the gate" or "of justice," the latter term denoting one who fully embraced the Jews' religion.

Such was the religion of nearly all the members of the Sanhedrin. Their opposition to Herod was not of a pure, unselfish character. Even their zeal for the Temple did but cover up their own personal ambition. They could perhaps die for the Temple,—as a king might die fighting for his crown, or a soldier for glory; but they were not prepared to show their love for that Temple by leading holy and consistent lives. On the contrary, they were earthly, grovelling, and sensual in their pursuits; or, if they did not commit the baser vices, they sought their happiness—they found a selfish gratification—in the good opinion, the approbation, of their fellow-men, rather than in the favor of God. These very men, had they been in the Roman Senate, would have taken sides either with Cæsar or Pompey, Octavius or Antony, on political grounds chiefly, according to their individual preferences or as they could best advance their individual interests. Religious zeal or engagedness did but hide the swelling ambition or earthliness, in some form or other, of their sensual and sordid hearts.

This was precisely the class of men Herod had to deal with; and, *nomine mutando*, the name being changed, the same principles of political rivalry ruled in Jerusalem as in Rome, in the Jewish Sanhedrin as in the Roman Senate; the same passions led to the same results. This party had already slain Herod's father Antipater, and his eldest brother Phasael: they would have slain him too if he had fallen into their hands. Herod, now that they were in his power, treated them as enemies,—as men whose death was essential to the safety and peace of his kingdom. The entire Sanhedrin he

therefore put to death, every man of them, save two,—Pollio (or Hillel, supposed father of Simeon) and Sameas, two of the most eminent men in the council, who through the whole of the siege had favored Herod and advised the rest to receive him as their king. Had they complied, they would have saved their lives; for Herod promised that if they would open the gates of the city he would grant a general amnesty,—that he would fully pardon those who had done him the greatest injuries. Not only was this offer rejected, but in the presence of the Roman army his name was loaded with opprobrium, and he was denounced as unfit and unworthy to reign. They paid with their lives the price of their contumacy and opposition.

Besides the Sanhedrin were slain others,—quite a number of the particular adherents and most violent partisans of Antigonus. Among those proscribed were the sons of Baba,* as they are called. None were more bitterly opposed to Herod than these, as none were of greater dignity. They were among the most powerful supporters of Antigonus. They were held also in very high esteem by the people, and their voice, for or against, was very potent. Yet these, by the connivance of Costobarus, brother-in-law of Herod,† (he had married Salome,) escaped. Costobarus, whom Herod set to guard the gates, having an eye to his interest in the future should a change occur in the government, conveyed them secretly out of the city and hid them on his own farms. Here they were concealed for the space

* Joseph. Antiq. book xv, ch. 7, sect. 10.

† Salome married Costobarus after the death of Joseph, her first husband.

of twelve years,—so long that they were forgotten ; but Salome at the end of this time betrayed her husband's secret, and they perished at last,—Costobarus with them. But, though these escaped for the present, the rest of the principal supporters of Antigonus, with the Sanhedrin, (making in all over a hundred,) were taken and put to death. From day to day, first one, then another, were executed in the city of Jerusalem. With such inflexible severity did Herod proceed against the avowed enemies of his government.

Already during the siege blood had flowed freely. Antigonus had not spared on his side ; and now that Herod had the power he retaliated. Men most eminent for birth, station, and wealth were daily put to death and their property confiscated. And lest when they were carried out of the gates of the city for burial any portion of their wealth should be secreted about them, the bodies were searched at the gates, and the silver and gold thus taken set apart to the public use. Not that Herod appropriated any part of it to himself. Avarice, rapacity, was not one of his vices ; but the demands of Antony were so great that it was hardly possible to meet them. After a while, however, the city had a respite from scenes of distress and blood.

We are glad to close this account. At the same time, it is fair to say that we are not to impute Herod's conduct on this occasion to any native cruelty, but to the policy of that age in connection with the violence of political faction. The lust of power had given rise even among the Jews—because they had forsaken God—to all these different animosities ; and as this party or

that rose to power, the weaker one had to suffer. On the ground of party necessity or political expediency Herod acted: at least, this was the leading motive. No doubt he was actuated also by personal animosity,—by a feeling of revenge toward those who were his enemies and opposed to his authority. But several years were yet to elapse before Herod began to act out in earnest the character of the TYRANT. There will be room enough by-and-by to portray him in the blackest colors: let us not anticipate that time, or make him a MONSTER before he became one. In our next chapter we will have occasion to describe the first real, wilful, deliberate crime of which he was guilty,—namely, the murder of his wife's brother, the youthful Aristobulus. Jealousy as it related to his crown and kingdom, lest in Aristobulus his brother-in-law he should find a successful aspirant to the throne, led to the perpetration of this fearful crime, the stepping-stone of many others.

CHAPTER V.

ANANELUS MADE HIGH-PRIEST.

WHEN we read of the innumerable crimes to which the possession of a crown has given rise, it would seem as if some demon must personify ambition, and push on the perpetrator, step by step, till he reaches the brink of the precipice, and then urge him to make the fatal

plunge. Thus, Cæsar on the border of the Rubicon hesitates: the fearful calamities into which he is about to plunge his unhappy country rise before his eyes. But the prospect of unbounded power invites him forward; he is dazzled, bewitched; he casts reflection to the winds, he blinds himself to the consequences, and rushes headlong into the stream. The boundary once passed, there is no return. What have men not done to secure a crown! The glitter of the shining bauble dazzles and bewilders, and conscience, piety, and justice are forgotten. Herod was no exception to the rule. It can hardly be said that he obtained the throne by any very unjustifiable means; but, once obtained, he was ever after haunted by the green-eyed monster jealousy, lest some rival should snatch it from his tenacious grasp. His ambition was very great; it was always on the increase; and the fear that any one should seize his crown and take his hard-won kingdom from him disturbed the quiet of his whole life, and led him to the commission of many crimes.

Herod was hardly seated on the throne before dread seized him from this source, and that through his brother-in-law, the youthful Aristobulus.

Aristobulus, brother of Mariamne,* wife of Herod, was grandson both of Hyrcanus and Aristobulus. His parents were Alexander and Alexandra,—one the eldest son of Aristobulus, the other the daughter and only child of Hyrcanus. His father was dead,—having been put to death, as we have seen, by Scipio, father-in-law of Pompey, during the civil war of Pompey and Cæsar:

* In Hebrew Miriam.

the mother was still alive, and now residing with her daughter Mariamne. Next to Hyrcanus, Aristobulus was lineally entitled to the throne, and also to the priesthood. Indeed, Herod when he went to Rome intended to ask the throne of Antony for him, in the place of Antigonus, whom the Parthians had made king, and who on that account, as well as for other reasons, was considered their enemy by the Romans. Unexpectedly, as we have already narrated, Antony proposed that Herod should become king himself, reckoning in this case on his assistance in the expedition he proposed to make against the Parthians. Herod had designed to be to Aristobulus what his father Antipater had been to Hyrcanus,—the guardian of the kingdom under him; but, when the glittering prize was held out to him, his heart beat high, his virtue wavered, and, instead of procuring the kingdom for Aristobulus, he obtained it for himself. Perhaps Mariamne herself was somewhat disappointed, as it is not at all unlikely Herod made known to her his intention when he set out for Rome. Still, neither the mother nor the daughter appears to have taken this much to heart at this time. Indeed, it required all the energy and ability of Herod to make his way to the throne: Aristobulus would never have succeeded.

At length the time came when it fell to Herod's lot to appoint in the place of Antigonus one of Aaron's line to the office of high-priest. Aristobulus was the rightful claimant of this great office,—an office hardly, if at all, inferior to that of king. According to the law of Moses, Herod could not fill the high-priesthood: he was not of Aaron's line. What is he to do? Already

he looks with an evil eye upon Aristobulus; for he fears to raise up so formidable a rival to himself. He revolves the thing in his mind. He knows he shall give offence if he appoint any one else: still, he sees a spectre in that path; he knows not what dangers may lurk in that direction; he is afraid to venture. He appoints, therefore, an old acquaintance to the office,—one not likely to become a rival,—Ananelus, a Jew of Babylonia beyond the Euphrates. A priest of Aaron's line, he was legally entitled to the office; but the Asamoneans had held it now so long that they appeared to have nearly the exclusive possession of it.

This appointment gave great offence to Alexandra, the mother of Mariamne and Aristobulus. She burned with resentment toward Herod that he should appoint another, and in this case an obscure priest of Babylonia, to that high office instead of her son. That he should be excluded from the kingdom was an indignity scarcely to be endured; but that he should also be deprived of the high-priesthood was intolerable. Her anger, her indignation, were very great. And to some extent Mariamne participated in her feeling, thinking that Herod had disgraced their ancient house. From this hour commenced those domestic troubles which, in one shape or another, haunted Herod's princely residence ever after, and harassed the rest of his life,—so that the outward splendor of his reign was but a poor compensation for the loss of peace,—of inward and domestic tranquillity.

Alexandra, the original fomentor of this domestic trouble, was a woman of a very different temper from that of her easy, good-natured, unambitious, inactive

father, Hyrcanus. She partook not of his temperament in the least, but of that of her uncle Aristobulus and her cousins Alexander and Antigonus. She was bold, crafty, and politic, as they were, and as fiery, reckless, and imprudent. To carry her point, like them, she was ever ready to rush upon any enterprise, however wild or hazardous.

It is curious to observe the difference between the earlier and later members of the Asamonean family. Mattathias and his five sons, from Judas Maccabæus down to Simon, were animated by a holy, unselfish ambition. Their object was to protect the religion of their fathers. They did not draw the sword and excite the nation to war for their own aggrandizement: they acted from a sense of duty,—from a spirit of obedience to the divine command. They were pure patriots, moved by the holiest and most exalted motives. It was not place, or office, or power, that charmed them, but the deliverance of their country from oppression, and still more the preservation of their holy altar from profanation, and to save from impending ruin that system of religious worship which God had ordained. The faith of Judas Maccabæus in God was sublime. And so of the rest.*

What was true of Mattathias and his sons was true

* The following speech of Judas on the eve of battle to his soldiers will give some idea of this. He had but a few with whom to fight a large army of Syrians, and his soldiers had asked how they should be able to fight against so great a multitude. When Judas thus speaks:—

“It is no hard matter for many to be shut up in the hands of a few; and with the God of heaven it is all one to deliver with a great multitude or a small company. For the victory of battle standeth not in the multitude of a host; but strength cometh from heaven. They come against us in much pride and iniquity, to destroy us and our wives and children, and to

also, in an eminent sense, of John Hyrcanus, youngest son of Simon and grandson of Mattathias. Distinguished for valor, he was equally distinguished for piety. The spirit of prophecy rested upon him. God spake to him in an audible voice, and revealed the future in a vision of the night. His life and character remind one of that of the good king Hezekiah; and, like him, he was greatly prospered of God in all his undertakings. But at his death a wondrous change passed over the spirit of his descendants. His eldest son, Alexander, rose in rebellion against his mother, and, having deprived her of the kingdom, he put her in prison, and, with a cruelty greater than that of Nero, starved her to death. In a fit of envy, he murdered his brother Antigonus, dying soon after of an accusing conscience, imagining he saw the pale ghosts of his mother and brother around his dying bed. His brother Alexander Jannæus, who succeeded him, hesitated at no arts of worldly policy to promote his ends. He was shrewd, cunning,* cruel: he was given to debauchery and intemperance. Alexandra, his wife, was a woman inordi-

spoil us; but we fight for our lives and our laws. Wherefore the Lord himself will overthrow them before our face; and as for you, be ye not afraid of them." 1 Maccab. iii, 18-22.

* An instance of his craft we have in his dying hour. He died while engaged in the siege of Ragaba, a city beyond the Jordan. His wife, in great distress, asked what would become of her and her children after his death, as she could not sustain the government against the Pharisees, who, now that he was removed, would again rise up in arms. He advised her to conceal his death till she had taken the city; then, returning in triumph to Jerusalem, she was to call together the chief men of the Pharisees and to make peace with them. She was to call them to her council, (they had been excluded from all places of trust and honor in the government for twenty-six years,) to engage to govern in conformity with their

nately fond of power, and set her heart greatly on earthly glory. Though strongly tinctured with Pharisaism and strict in her attention to every religious rite, every ceremonial observance, she pursued power and fame with avidity, and held her sceptre with a strong grasp till death wrenched it from her hand. Aristobulus, her youngest son, was governed by the same spirit,—though possessing little of the superior understanding of his mother. His sons, Alexander and Antigonus, were like their father. Such was the character of Alexandra, mother of the beautiful Mariamne, wife of Herod. The fear of God was not before her eyes. She was of the earth, earthy.

From the time when Alexander, eldest son of the good king John Hyrcanus, put the diadem on his brow and assumed the title of king, the whole spirit and character of the family underwent an entire change. A worldly ambition had succeeded to that faith in God and pure love of country, irrespective of selfish aims, which distinguished the first Maccabees. The gold had become dim; the most fine gold was changed. Corrupt, sensual, earthly, the Asamonean princes from the death of the good king John Hyrcanus were Jews only in name.

advice, and to reinstate them in the offices they once held. As to her husband, she was to place his body at their disposal, to treat it with honor or dishonor, as they chose. "This," said he, "will be enough. They will forget their animosity to me, give me an honorable burial, and reconcile the nation to your government." So it came to pass; and Alexandra, by pursuing this course, was able without difficulty to seat herself on the throne of her husband, to keep the nation in peace during the nine years of her reign, and to transmit the kingdom to her children. Joseph. Antiq. book xiii. p. 15, sect. 5.

Alexandra—acting after the manner of a worldly, ambitious woman, not with the faith of her great ancestry—resolved upon revenge; and, knowing the cupidity of Cleopatra, she sought, no doubt by large promises, to gain her co-operation. Through her physician, (a graduate, probably, of the medical school at Alexandria, which on account of its celebrity drew students from all quarters,) she opened a correspondence with Cleopatra, and made known her indignation on account of the selection of Ananelus for the high-priesthood to the exclusion of her son. It may be that Cleopatra herself had a grudge against Herod for not engaging in her service agreeably to her request when on his way to Rome. Whatever the motive by which she was actuated,* she engaged zealously in the cause of Alexandra, and used all her influence with Antony—which was nearly unbounded—to induce him to rescind the appointment of Ananelus. In this, however, she did not succeed.

At this stage of the proceedings came to Jerusalem Dellius, one of Mark Antony's chief confidants. It was Dellius whom Antony employed to wait upon Cleopatra when he first came into Asia, and who advised that artful and bad woman to meet Antony as Juno met Jupiter, with every meretricious attraction of dress and ornament, assuring her that he would readily fall into the alluring snare.† Dellius was right. More silly than

* From what occurred several years after this period, we might almost infer that slighted love added to the vehemency of Cleopatra's hate,—which, with her cupidity, would easily account for the prominent part she now took, at the solicitation of Alexandra, against Herod.

† Plutarch, *Life of Antony*. Rom. II. book xiv. lines 191 to 219.

the bird, who avoids the open snare, Antony fell into that which was laid for him with his eyes wide open. This same Dellius was now in Jerusalem; and to him, as the bosom-confidant of Antony, Alexandra, opened her secret store of wrongs, and gained his co-operation. Studious to please Antony,—though from the basest, vilest motives,—he spoke to this mother (did she deserve that sacred name?) of the beauty of her children Mariamne and Aristobulus, as if that beauty was more than mortal. He advised her to have their pictures taken and sent to Antony. Hurried on by her passions, Alexandra sent the pictures of her son and daughter to Antony by Dellius. Antony, in reply, in a very carefully-worded letter, wrote to Herod inviting Aristobulus to Alexandria.

Herod now understood the underhand agency that was at work. He saw the cunning hand and scheming head of his mother-in-law in it all. She had, he found, woven a net around him by enlisting Antony and Cleopatra on her side,—one through his lust, the other through her cupidity or hate, or both combined; and now the spectre that haunted him his life long—assumed gigantic proportions and seemed ready to tear from him his coveted prize. He was deeply enraged at Alexandra, and his first impulse was to put her to death; but Antony stood in his way. At length, after careful consideration, he concluded that of the two evils presented to his choice the least would be the appointment of Aristobulus; for well he understood the source whence the difficulty sprang. So important did he conceive this step to be, that he called a council of his chief friends and opened the whole case to them.

They concurred with him as to the course he proposed to follow. When the decision was made known to Alexandra, she could not restrain her joy; but, at the same time, she denied any intention to place Aristobulus her son on the throne. Mariamne also was highly pleased with the unexpected result,—she having used unavailingly every art of persuasion to effect the desired change.

On the surface, harmony appeared to be restored; but suspicion had entered Herod's heart. As for Alexandra, she did not continue long at rest. She was soon agitated with another passion. Having secured the high-priesthood for her son, she next desired the kingdom. "He was entitled," she said, "to both,—to one as well as the other." Her bold, busy head, could it cease from plotting? She was so artful, so deep, so designing, and at the same time so utterly unscrupulous, he could not trust her a single moment out of his sight. She had shown already great powers of dissimulation. It was also evident that she was as corrupt and base as she was artful, enterprising, and ambitious.

Alexandra had a palace of her own at Jericho. It may have been her own by inheritance; it may have been the gift of Herod. She had numerous attendants. As the mother of the Queen of Judea, she was surrounded with all the glitter of a court. Yet ere long, amid the grand display, she found she was watched,—that spies among her own attendants beset her steps and caught up every unguarded word she spoke: in fine, she soon felt she was a prisoner in her own palace. This discovery filled her with rage and hate. She

became Herod's implacable enemy. Once more she wrote to Cleopatra, who invited her, with Aristobulus, to come to Egypt and place herself and son under her protection. She resolved upon this step.

But how was she to escape the vigilance of the spies set to watch her every step, her least look or motion? She formed her plan. She had two coffins made,—one for herself, one for her son: in these they were to be conveyed to the nearest sea-port, where a vessel was to receive them and convey them to Alexandria. She would have succeeded but for an accident. One of her trusty servants spoke of the project to another member of her household, who he thought was in the plot as well as himself. By this person it was made known to Herod on the verge of its execution. Herod said nothing, but suffered Alexandra to proceed. At length, when all was ready, the mother and son, as two dead persons, were carried out of the city and swiftly conveyed along the mountainous and dangerous road which leads from Jericho to the sea-side. At a certain point on this road Herod had placed soldiers in ambush; and at the moment when Alexandra was beginning to breathe freely and to congratulate herself upon her escape, she was stopped and brought back to Jericho. What could she say? Not a word. She was taken in the very act. Herod would now surely have put her to death, but that he was restrained by his fear of Antony. He pretended to smile at her stratagem, and to forgive the attempt; but he formed the dire resolve to put Aristobulus out of the way at the first favorable opportunity. The mother had sealed, by this last act, the fate of her son.

Here we reach the point where Herod, under the influence of malevolent passions, determined premeditatedly to imbrue his hands in the blood of an innocent boy,—his own youthful brother-in-law,—his wife's only brother. To Herod he was now a rival; and perhaps Herod may have thought—as he had assented to his mother's plan, though he had so lately been elevated to the next highest office in the land, that of the high-priesthood—that he actually did aspire to the throne. But this is not likely. His mother had educated him to submission; and one might be inclined to think, from the little we know of him, that, like his grandfather Hyrcanus, he was of a plastic make, and by such a woman as his mother could readily be turned whichever way she pleased. Nevertheless, to Herod's excited mind Aristobulus was a rival to be dreaded, and therefore from this time was most cordially hated by him. Herod's jealousy had distorted the misguided but harmless boy into a most formidable opponent. While he lived, Herod could not sleep in peace. Thus early in his history, from the same motive, the same blind fury or passion, did Herod begin to prepare for one of the last acts of his evil life,—the destruction of the LORD'S ANOINTED. The dark shadow of the future is already on his path; for when all fear of a rival claimant to his throne had long since departed, he was as solicitous to transmit his kingdom to his posterity as he had been to keep it for himself. Herod had his wish. From him sprang a whole family of kings, succeeding each other for several successive generations. Worshipping the god of this world in lieu of the God of his fathers, he received as his reward a large and

flourishing kingdom, and a title bestowed upon but few of the great men of antiquity,—that of Herod THE GREAT.

At the following Feast of Tabernacles—a feast which was attended by a great multitude of the people from every part of the land—Aristobulus, for the first and last time, officiated in his priestly robes. They had been brought out, as usual, from the room in the palace of the Maccabees appropriated for this sacred purpose, and the youthful high-priest had arrayed himself in the sacerdotal vestments. The breastplate with the twelve precious stones—of almost priceless value—glittered in the light of the morning sun; but the supernatural lustre which once was seen to shine forth from the stones on such occasions, indicating the presence of the Deity,* was seen there no more. The youth and beauty of the boy high-priest, the grace with which he performed his sacred functions, won every heart: the people could not feast their eyes enough upon the lad, and were loud and undisguised in their admiration. The whole city was filled with his praise; and shouts of applause rent the air. Herod saw this, heard this; and, if he was jealous before, his jealousy was increased sevenfold. His soul was stirred to its very depths with evil passions; and though he might smile with others, and seem to share the general joy and respond to the loud acclaims of the people,—though under the semblance of a pleased expression he might hide his inward discomposure,—he resolved at any risk

* This presence was signified by the terms Urim and Thummim, *Light* and *Perfection*, which properly appertain to God only. God was in the breast-plate, and manifested his presence there as in the cloud between the Cherubim.

to get rid of him at once,—to remove the poor, hapless boy, as if he were a poisonous serpent, out of his path. That night the spectre appeared in a more withering form than ever.

Herod's body-guard was composed of soldiers from Galatia,—called Gauls, because Galatia was settled by soldiers that had many years before invaded Greece and Asia* from Gaul, (France.) This body-guard Herod took good care, by gifts and honors, to attach exclusively to himself. He proposed to make them the instruments of the murder,—but in such a way that it should seem to be an accident. He meant that his hand should not be seen; and he laid his plan accordingly.

Not long after the Feast of Tabernacles, Herod and Aristobulus were at Jericho, at Alexandra's castle or palace. Not far from the house were large fish-ponds, fed by streams that made what is now an arid desert a blooming garden. It was towards evening: they had just supped, and the youth was somewhat heated with the wine he had drunk. Herod pretended to be full of jollity: he engaged as in boyish sports with Aristobulus, scuffling, running, wrestling, as a boy himself. He had insensibly drawn him to the edge of the fish-pond. The shades of evening were darkening fast around them. A select company of Herod's guard, by a preconcerted arrangement, were bathing at the

* Gaul, (or France, so now called,) being overstocked with inhabitants, sent forth great numbers to invade and seize other countries. Most of these perished: they were defeated in Asia, Macedonia, and Greece. Some that survived having joined Nicomedes, King of Bithynia, he assigned to them as a residence that part of Lesser Asia which from them was called *Galatia*.

time in the pond, splashing the water to and fro, and engaging with each other in feats of strength and speed in the water. Their voices sounded joyously; and Herod acted as if he had caught the spirit of their merriment. Flushed with heat and exercise,—the day had been very warm, and the evening was close and sultry,—Herod proposed to Aristobulus to join the swimmers in the pond. Aristobulus, little dreaming of Herod's dark design, did so; but hardly was he in the water ere the Gauls, as if in play, began to plunge him under the water, Herod standing on the bank and looking on. Stifling the voice of the drowning youth, and overpowering his feeble efforts to extricate himself from their hands, they kept him under the water till life was extinct.

Alexandra was told that her son had been accidentally drowned. Herod appeared before her as if overwhelmed with grief. Most beautiful in death the lad lay: the joy of the palace was turned into mourning in an instant. Alexandra was not deceived,—though she looked and acted as if she believed the report; but in her heart did she fully resolve that Herod should expiate the murder of her son.*

The news soon reached Jerusalem and circulated

* Cleopatra's connection with Alexandra was wholly venal. She herself killed her own brother for the same reason that Herod killed Aristobulus. She murdered also her sister Arsinoë. And yet, in the face of facts like these, we find such a writer as Milman, in his "History of the Jews," say that Cleopatra espoused the cause of Alexandra "with the warmest interest of a wife and mother." Herod's character is dark enough; but it does appear, where Herod is concerned, that the worst characters are invested with more or less virtue, that he may appear yet the blacker by the contrast. Thus, the later Asamonean princes appear with hardly a blemish,—though they sacrificed every right feeling to their ambition.

through the city. The mourning was deep and general. Every family felt the loss as if it were their own. Herod made a great display with the funeral, and so well acted his part—showed such well-dissembled grief—as to allay, if not to crush, suspicion in the minds of many. Aristobulus dead, Ananelus was raised anew to that high office.

CHAPTER V.

THE HILL-COUNTRY OF JUDEA.

WHILE the palace at Jericho, and the city of Jerusalem, resounded with lamentations in consequence of the death of Aristobulus,—while Alexandra brooded revenge, and Herod, by outward parade and the appearance of grief, sought to avert suspicion from himself as the author of the deed,—there lived afar from all this din and strife, in Hebron, one of the cities of the hill-country of Judea, a good priest and his wife, who pursued the even, blameless tenor of their way, happy in the love and favor of God, entirely satisfied with their lot, and assiduously discharging every duty of life, whether of a private or public nature. The name of this priest was Zacharias; that of his wife, Elizabeth. She was of the daughters of Aaron,—a lineal descendant of the pontifical house of Aaron; and he, of course, was a priest of the same house. His age may have been forty or forty-five about the time of the death of

Aristobulus, and that of his wife possibly a little less. Though they had reached this age, journeying along the path of life together, they had as yet no child. This was a subject of grief to them both; and especially was it to Elizabeth, as it had been to Hannah ere God heard her prayer in the birth of Samuel, that distinguished servant and prophet of the Most High God. Like Hannah, Elizabeth had prayed to God often and earnestly; Zacharias, also, had united his supplications with those of his wife: yet year after year passed away and those prayers were not answered. Yet there can hardly be a doubt that there was some secret monitor, some inward monition, that led them, like Abraham and Sarah, "against hope to pray in hope." Some intimation, it is not unlikely, they had of a son from the voice of God speaking in their hearts, when we recollect what took place many years afterwards. While so many hearts were moved with expectation on account of the near approach of the advent of the Lord's Anointed,—while an Anna prophesied in Jerusalem, turning the eyes of many to the STAR that was to come out of Jacob and the SCEPTRE that was soon to arise out of Israel,*—while Simeon was filled with the same hope and expectation,—while many a heart was beating high and many an eye glistening with joy in the prospect of the birth of Zion's wondrous King,—it would indeed have been a remarkable circumstance if Zacharias and Elizabeth had not been favoured with some premonition of the great part they should take in the

* Numb. xxiv, 17. See the most remarkable prophecy of Balaam son of Beor.

coming event. When we recollect that their son was predestined to be the forerunner of Christ, and was to prepare the way of the *Lord*,—that his birth had been announced by Isaiah so many centuries before,*—that the last two verses of the last book of the Bible, the book of Malachi, foretold his office and work,—and that this son was to take precedence of all the prophets, that he was to usher in in person the Messiah, pointing *Him* out to the Jewish nation as the Shiloh, the promised Christ,—when we recollect all these circumstances, it hardly seems reasonable to suppose but that Zacharias and Elizabeth had—though it be not recorded—some signal premonition of a birth that was to sustain so close, so mysterious, a connection with that of Christ, the Saviour of the world. And though years passed on and they were still childless, yet they continued to believe, hoping on, hoping ever, hoping against hope.

There is no doubt Zacharias felt there was great need of divine interposition. The book of Malachi gives a sad picture of the priesthood as long back as his day. We do not know when he lived and prophesied; but we do know that notwithstanding all the efforts of Ezra and Nehemiah, who for twenty-five years (Ezra thirteen and Nehemiah twelve) labored to reform the people, their proclivity to evil soon swept away all the barriers these good men raised to keep them obedient to the law. Not only the people, but the priests,—not only the priests, but the pontifical family itself, the high-priests,—led the way in transgression; and impiety

* Seven hundred and twelve years before Christ. What a lapse of time!

and infidelity reared their hydra head against God and his truth.

Among other pestilent evils that the bad lives of the priests gave rise to, (this was before the time of the Maccabees,) Sadduceeism spread out its deadly shade. False doctrine is a happy subterfuge for evil living; and the priests of Judea, aping Epicurus, put the soul to an eternal sleep, and profanely denied the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead,—the hope of the whole nation from Abraham's day to that time. When you wish to set the conscience at rest and live as you list, as if there were nothing beyond the grave, this is a lovely doctrine. It sets you to sleep as a deadly opiate; or, like the keen blast to a traveller on the wintry plain, it produces that pleasing, overpowering drowsiness from which there is no waking. For many, many years—from before the time of Malachi to that of Zacharias—the priesthood of Judea had been very degenerate. This is evident from the history of that period,—from the fanaticism which prevailed and which was substituted for religion. As if they were leaders of a political faction, they were animated by a spirit of demoniacal revenge. Of the high-priests little that is favorable can be said. The character of such a high-priest as Alexander Janneus, (high-priest as well as king,) of Aristobulus, of his son Antigonus, presented but a poor example of sanctity to the multitude. Hyrcanus was an exception; but his character poorly fitted him to withstand the corruptions of those evil times. Even before the times of the Maccabees—about the time of the commencement of the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes, the great Jewish persecutor—there were a Jason and a

Menelaus, (we shall have occasion to speak of these again ere long.) the most corrupt of men, who filled and desecrated this high office. It could not but be that, under influences so malign, evil should increase. Zacharias saw and deplored the evil, mourned over a corrupt priesthood, and waited in expectation the wished-for day.

As for himself, he was a priest who offered an offering in righteousness.* His offering was pure, and the incense he burned before the Lord acceptable to him and "pleasant as in the days of old." He did not offer polluted bread on the altar.† "He did not offer the blind, the lame, the sick, for sacrifice." He did not say of the service of God, as too many of his brethren did, "Behold, what a weariness is it !"

Thus happy and useful he lived, attending his ministration at the Temple in Jerusalem in the order of his course. This occupied but little of his time; for so numerous were the priests that but twice in the year was he required to attend officially at the Temple. But at home, in Hebron, his life, his example, was as a lamp shining in a dark, dark night.

We now, for the present, take our leave of Zacharias and Elizabeth. We leave them at their happy, quiet home in Hebron,—Hebron, one of the cities of the priests from the days of Joshua. As a memento of holy living, they had ever in sight—in this ancient sacerdotal city, one of the cities of refuge in ancient times—the tomb of the patriarchs,—of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. There rested the fathers in hope till they

* Mal. iii. 3.

† Ibid. i. 7, 8, 13.

should come forth and live again in the days of the Messiah, in the time of his reign on earth. Rising above the vanities of time and soaring to the realities of things unseen as yet, they so lived as to show that they sought a city whose builder and maker is God. In sight of their tomb, Zacharias and Elizabeth are living so too.

Book Seventh.

ANTONY AND THE PARTHIANS.*

PROEM.

ANTONY, after his marriage with Octavia, remained some time in Rome,—went thence to Athens, thence to the East,—where, as has been intimated, he engaged, with little credit to himself, in the siege of Samosata. During the progress of this siege, Herod, as we have also seen, came to his assistance, was received by him

* The Parthian Empire, which proved so formidable to the Romans, originated in a defection from the Greek-Syrian Empire in the reign of Antiochus Theus, or the *Divine*, as he was surnamed. Seleucus Nicator was the first to whom Syria fell after the death of Alexander and the division of his great monarchy into four kingdoms, according to the prediction of Daniel. Antiochus Soter, son of Seleucus, was the second; and Antiochus Theus, the third. This defection occurred while Antiochus was carrying on war against Ptolemy Philadelphus of Egypt, the same at whose instance the Septuagint translation was made. One Arsaces, goaded by the wickedness of the Governor of Parthia, rose in rebellion, and successfully sustained his revolt; and this was the beginning of the kingdom of Parthia. Antiochus, having made peace with Ptolemy, was next engaged in war with his own brother. Arsaces made use of the favorable opportunity to establish himself so firmly, that afterwards even Antiochus the Great could not recover the lost province. As the Syrian Empire declined, Parthia grew in strength. Babylon became a hunting-park for its kings. Arsaces declared himself king B. C. 250,—in the thirty-fifth year of the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus, and in the early part of the reign of Antiochus Theus.

with distinguished honor, and rendered him valuable aid. From Samosata Antony returned to Athens,—when, hearing unfavorable reports of Octavius, he set sail for Italy; but Octavia, his wife, who was with him, by her interest with her brother reconciled him to Antony, and the two rival chiefs once more—but for the last time—exchanged friendly greetings. Leaving his wife and children under the care of Octavius, Antony, with his fleet of three hundred sail, left the shores of Italy, designing now to engage in the Parthian war, to revenge the defeat of Crassus, and to recover the standards and prisoners that had then fallen into their hands.

In the interval between his return and the war—while preparing for it, perhaps while time hung somewhat idly on his hands—the image of Cleopatra rose up to his view. His marriage with Octavia, the influence of her presence, the excitement of a new passion, for a while kept down the old fire; but, Octavia absent and Cleopatra near, Antony turned to Cleopatra as a moth to the flame. Contrary to the advice of his friends, disregarding their remonstrances, forgetful of every sacred tie and obligation, of his own honor and interest, as Plutarch says, he sent for Cleopatra to join him in Syria. The witchery she threw about him was never broken from this time. As if precipitated down a precipice, he rushed headlong to ruin. Never was blindness more complete, or infatuation more fatal. Forgetful of all else, he gave himself up to every indulgence, to riot and voluptuousness. Cleopatra, while dancing to the same measure, obtained the richest gifts from Antony. Antony, in his profusion, gave her province after province; but even his

profusion did not satisfy her boundless cupidity. It is not easy to find a single redeeming trait in this evil woman's character: she seems to have been wholly given up to work iniquity with greediness. Cupidity, lust, cruelty, deceit, treachery, make up her character,—embellished, it is true, with a fascination of manner, an art of pleasing, which it was not easy to resist. She had the snake-like power to charm her victim to his ruin.

Meantime Antony went on, though but feebly, with his preparations for the Parthian war.

Sixteen years had passed away since the defeat of Crassus. That expedition had been ill omened from the first. One of the tribunes of the people, by name Ateius, as Crassus was leaving Rome, required of him to desist from that war, and, had he been aided, would have detained him by force. Failing in this, he ran to the gate, threw incense upon a censor, and, as Crassus passed out, invoked on his head the most direful curses for engaging in an unjust, and consequently impious, war. As Crassus advanced into the country of the Parthians, refusing the advice of his own generals and allies, with an almost unaccountable obstinacy and blindness, he listened to a crafty Arabian in the pay of the Parthians, and was guided by him out into the open sandy plains, where his own army could scarcely act, while the Parthians on their fleet steeds could use their arrows with the most deadly effect. Miserably perished first his gallant son Publius, (an enthusiastic admirer and ardent follower of Cicero,*) and then himself; while of the

* When the bill for the banishment of Cicero was introduced, it was mainly through the solicitation of Publius that some twenty thousand

army twenty thousand were killed and ten thousand made prisoners. Now Antony, at the head of a formidable army, is about to avenge the death and defeat of Cassius.

But from the outset of the campaign Antony was spell-bound. He could not well avoid the expedition: he knew the Romans expected it and already wondered at the long delay; yet such was his eagerness to return and spend the winter with Cleopatra, that in his overhaste he precipitated all his measures, and defeated the end of the expedition.

Antony did not fare so badly as Crassus; but one large detachment of his army, consisting of ten thousand men, under the command of Statianus, designed to guard his battering-rams, which Antony in his haste had left behind, was defeated and wholly destroyed by the Parthians, and the commander slain. After this disaster, which happened in the earlier part of the expedition, little was left but to retreat. They had advanced three hundred miles into the enemy's country; they had recovered neither standards nor prisoners; yet at this point they were necessitated to retrace their steps. With great difficulty and loss this was effected; but at last the river Araxis, which separates Media from Armenia, was reached, the army crossed the stream, and Antony was safe on friendly soil. When the Roman soldiers had crossed the Araxis, they kissed the soil with joy,—as mariners, says Plu-

young men of the principal families of Rome went into mourning, attended Cicero through the streets, and entreated the people for him. See *Plutarch's Lives of Cicero and Crassus*.

tarch, who reach land after shipwreck. Winter had now set in; yet Antony, though there was no necessity for it, hurried his army along through snow and drifting storm in that cold and mountainous country,—several thousand of his soldiers perishing from exposure to the elements, for no other reason than that he might reach Cleopatra sooner. So ended this expedition, and with it, as one may say, Antony's career, (he performed nothing worthy of mention after this :) soon after, the battle of Actium was fought, Antony was defeated, and Octavius Cæsar became sole ruler of the Roman empire.

CHAPTER I.

HEROD SUMMONED TO LAODICEA BY ANTONY TO ANSWER FOR THE MURDER OF ARISTOBULUS.

If it be not mentioned,—if the historian have not recorded it,—you may be sure nevertheless that Herod did not escape the pangs of a guilty conscience for the murder of Aristobulus. He might not have so much to fear from a human tribunal as a common murderer; he might be out of the reach of justice, above law; but he could not escape the reproaches of his own heart. Taught as he had been from a child in the law of God,—having always heard that commandment of the Decalogue, “Thou shalt not kill,” sounding in his ears,—he was by no means free from the fear of the future

doom of the murderer whether of high or low degree. The light under which he acted was very different from that of those who had not the law; not that the law of nature did not enunciate the same law as that of Moses in respect of murder, but the degree of criminality on the part of the Gentile was modified more or less by the circumstances of the case. Besides all this, Herod had reason to dread the artifices of his mother-in-law, Alexandra. In his presence she did indeed act her part well: she knew how to do this: she gave no outward intimation of the suspicions she harbored. She smiled on Herod, and mingled her tears with his; she sought to lull his suspicions asleep; yet ere long she found an opportunity to inform Cleopatra of what had transpired. As the result of this, Antony, overpersuaded by the ceaseless importunity of Cleopatra, at length issued an order for Herod to appear before him and answer for the murder of Aristobulus.

This summons was as a clap of thunder falling suddenly on Herod's startled ear. This was the work of Alexandra: he knew this well; but the fear of Antony restrained him from any act of violence. She had dug a pit for his feet, but he did not dare to punish her. What a scene must the palace of Jericho have witnessed when Herod first saw his mother-in-law after the mask had fairly fallen from her face! Before she had attacked his throne; now she aimed at his life. She was playing a desperate game; and a question may arise whether she was not moved as much by ambition as affection. The mother who was ready to expose her young and innocent boy to the polluting touch of Antony, for the promotion of her ambitious purposes,

could hardly have possessed the affection of a mother. Her grief sprang perhaps as much from a feeling of revenge as from that of love. Herod, restraining in some degree his indignation, prepared to meet the charge with a bold, undaunted face,—this the second grand stage in guilt.

Antony was now at Laodicea, the chief city of Phrygia, situated at the head-waters of the Meander.* It was at this period a flourishing city, with every appliance of Asiatic luxury and Greek refinement, situated in the midst of a country vastly populous and luxuriantly fertile,—now silent and deserted as death. He was on his way to Armenia, and was accompanied by Cleopatra. When Antony first came into these parts, he had drained the country of the almost incredible sum of two hundred thousand talents; and yet now he laid on an additional impost. One Hybrias, acting in behalf of the people, came to him and said, “with a pleasantry,” remarks Plutarch, “that was agreeable to his humor, that if he doubled the taxes he ought to double the seasons too, and supply the people with two summers and two winters.” He further added, “that as Asia had already raised two hundred thousand talents, if he had not received it he should demand it of those that had; but if he had received it, and yet had it not, the people were undone.” Of Antony’s lavish waste we may judge a little when we are told that he gave a large estate to his cook for dressing one supper to his taste. Plutarch tells us that Philotas, a physician who was pursuing his studies at Alexandria, told his grandfather Lamprias that, being acquainted

* Dr. Durbin’s Travels in the East, vol. ii. p. 141.

with one of Antony's cooks, he was invited by him to see the preparations for supper. Upon entering the kitchen he saw eight wild boars roasting whole. Expressing his surprise, and remarking that the company must be very large for such a quantity of provisions, the cook smiled, and said that "the company did not exceed twelve; but, as every dish was to be roasted to a single turn, and he did not know when Antony would call for it, it was necessary to have a succession of suppers."* Antony was now in Asia, in company with Cleopatra, still acting over the same kind of life as in Alexandria, and which they called the *inimitable*.

To Laodicea Herod was summoned to meet a judge who he was persuaded would not be very strict if Cleopatra were out of the way. The danger, Herod well knew, consisted not in his guilt, not in the crime he had committed, heinous as that was, but in the greediness of Cleopatra. She had set her heart on his kingdom, and if she could persuade Antony to put him to death, it would be hers. Could Herod find a way to satisfy her, Antony was not so scrupulous a judge or so severe a censor as to lead to much apprehension of severity on his part. Magnificently attended, Herod arrived in Laodicea. He carried with him great presents; and with these, together with the renewal of their former intercourse, (Antony seems always to have entertained a strong regard and sincere friendship for Herod,) Herod soon found himself on the old familiar footing with his former friend and patron. To pacify Cleopatra, in the place of the kingdom of his friend Antony gave her

* Plutarch's Life of Antony.

the province of Cœle-Syria,* which, like the medicated cake the Sibyl cast to Cerberus as she conducted Æneas through the gloomy shades of Tartarus, allayed her zeal for the murdered Aristobulus and repressed her sympathy for Alexandra. The whole subject was dropped from that moment. Herod received from Antony the most honorable tokens of regard and friendship. Every day he was a guest at his table; he sat by his side in the public tribunal, hearing causes; and when Antony set out for Armenia he attended him some distance on his route. At length they parted to meet no more. It was their last interview. Herod returned to Judea stronger in the favor and protection of Antony than ever. But, if thus prospered he returned home after a journey that boded so much ill, trouble awaited him at his own threshold.

Joseph, his father Antipater's brother, to whom Herod left the care of the government during his absence, had acted very indiscreetly. Anxious to serve his nephew, in his visits to the palace he often spake to Mariamne and her mother of Herod's love. Both the mother and daughter, but especially the mother, spoke rather jestingly of this, as if it was hardly as strong as Joseph represented. Joseph,—ill fitted to contend with the wit of two women, who both in their hearts knew and admitted what he said,—to leave, as he thought, no room for doubt, told them (and Herod, jealous of Mariamne to

* Antony actually put to death Lysinias, son of Ptolemy, at the instigation of Cleopatra, and bestowed upon her the principality of Chalcis. This was not, however, wholly without a cause, as Lysinias had invited the Parthians into Syria: still, it was through Cleopatra he was led to proceed against him.

the last degree, had in fact left such a command) that the vehemency of Herod's affection for Mariamne was such that he could not endure the thought that she should survive him, and that in case of his death she was to die also. Such was the charge he had received. What was jest before was earnest now. Mother and daughter—neither feigned now—were filled with anger and astonishment at this tyrannical command. A singular proof of love, truly! This was unmixed selfishness brought out in its most odious form, set forth under its most hateful colors,—not willing that she whom he pretended to love so much should survive himself. What had Mariamne done to deserve such a fate? If Mariamne had not loved very fondly before, it is easy to suppose that what Joseph had been so foolish as to reveal would not increase her love. She felt indeed solicitous to free herself from such odious tyranny.

At this critical moment—how often does a crisis in our lives turn upon some sudden, some most unlooked-for event!—word came to Jerusalem—one of those rumors that cannot be traced, that float in the air—that Herod was dead, that he had been beheaded by Antony. How it arose was not known: some evil-wisher of Herod's had probably given it currency. Alexandra, giving hasty heed to the report, and Mariamne, in this instance listening to her mother's rash counsel, made preparations to leave the city and to seek shelter and protection in the Roman camp, which was pitched outside the walls. But hardly had this plan been formed, and some steps taken toward its execution, when the report was contradicted, and letters arrived from Herod informing them that he was well

and in high favor with Antony. Soon after Herod arrived, greatly elated with his success.

Hardly had he returned, when Salome his sister, and Cypros his mother, (his mother must now have been far advanced in life,) informed him of Alexandra's plans; for she had made no secret of them, taking it for granted that Herod was dead. Salome was not satisfied with this. Though Joseph was her husband as well as her uncle, she spoke of his frequent visits to the palace during her brother's absence, and of a too great intimacy between him and Mariamne,—an accusation as false as it was base. But Mariamne had deeply offended Salome by her haughty manner, and had spoken contemptuously of the meanness of her sister-in-law's birth,—of her low origin. The sharp, taunting words of Mariamne went far down into Salome's heart and rankled there. Salome was not of a very forgiving nature. The doctors whose words had the greatest weight in the Jewish schools of divinity at Jerusalem taught that we must hate our enemies, (thus perverting the law of Moses;) and Salome hated Mariamne, and had vowed revenge. Knowing the fiery, impetuous nature of her brother,—his jealousy,—she brought this slanderous charge against Mariamne.

Herod did not on this occasion fly into so violent passion as was usual with him when greatly aroused either by anger or jealousy, but, with a degree of moderation, took occasion privately to question Mariamne, informing her of what he had heard. Herod should not have hearkened to the foul aspersion: he should have given it to the winds; for, while Mariamne's proud, imperious spirit was undoubtedly a

serious defect, she was most exemplary as a wife and mother. She was above suspicion. Open as the day, she had nothing to hide. Herod had no sooner introduced the subject than she denied the charge with all the consciousness of innocence,—and perhaps with a little of that asperity and pride that too strongly marked her character. No doubt she felt deeply aggrieved that Herod should give the least credit to the groundless charge. He was soon convinced; for his love seconded her asseverations. A complete reconciliation took place; when Mariamne, in an unguarded hour,—not for one moment thinking of the unfavorable construction which Herod would put on her words,—fondly chiding him, said, “He was a lover, indeed to order her death in case of his own.”

Unfortunate words! They confirmed his worst fears; for Herod at once concluded that Joseph would not have betrayed so grave a secret if his intimacy with Mariamne had not been criminal. With ungovernable fury he tore himself from her arms, and was about to slay her on the spot, when, quivering with emotion, but restrained by his love, he stopped in his headlong course. His heart failed him. With a serene and intrepid aspect this daughter of a noble line awaited the blow. Fear did not pale that cheek, move that heart, or quench the lustre of that sparkling eye. She spake not, she moved not. Hurrying from her presence, upon his aged uncle Herod vented his wrath. Without giving this brother of his own father an opportunity to say a word in his defence, he ordered him to be put to death,—an order which was instantly executed. Then, recalling what he had heard of the treacherous designs

of Alexandra, he ordered her to be cast into prison,—thus sending dismay and death through his household.

Where now was his happy return? Of how little avail was the favor of Antony! His cup of joy had been mixed with the bitterest ingredients. Was there no mark of the divine displeasure here? The death of Aristobulus, had it nothing to do with this dark and fearful tragedy in his own house? He has escaped Antony, a human tribunal; but the avenger of blood is already on his track.

CHAPTER II

CLEOPATRA IN JERUSALEM.

WHILE these sad scenes were enacting in Herod's family, Antony went on his way to Armenia. Cleopatra accompanied him as far as the Euphrates, and then set out on her return. Taking Apamea and Damascus on her route, she came to Jerusalem. She had an interest in Judea; for, though she could not persuade Antony to add the Jewish kingdom to the list of her possessions, she had obtained the grant of those two parcels of ground in the vicinity of Jericho which produced the almost priceless balm,* that rare unguent which gently

* One piece was larger than the other. The largest piece was one hundred feet broad and two hundred feet long.

distilled from the low balsam-tree, growing nowhere else but there.* Their value must have been great, indeed, to make Cleopatra covet them, and take them as it were in lieu of the rest of Herod's dominions. Under pretence, perhaps, of seeing these two famous *gardens*, as they were called, Cleopatra came to the city of Jerusalem on her way to Egypt.

It is a curious association, that of the name of Cleopatra with the Holy City, the city of Zion, the city of the Great King. In the latter part of the government of Nehemiah (about 413 B.C.) Herodotus had visited Jerusalem, which he calls by a name that was common to it,—the Holy City, or Cadytis, (which means the same thing,) as it reads in his history.† Not very many years after this, another visitor it probably had,—no less a person than Plato. At all events, Plato, like Herodotus, travelled in the East; and, anxious as he was for truth, and impartial as a philosopher, it is hardly likely he overlooked a city the seat of so august a temple, and the capital of a people whose religious sentiments and rites gave them a world-wide reputation. The writings of Moses, we have reason to believe, were seen and consulted by him.‡

With these names, truly illustrious, is now to be joined

* Pliny says these balsam-trees were found nowhere else. *Prid. Con.*, under the year 63. Josephus expressly asserts the same thing.

† There can be no doubt Herodotus means Jerusalem by Cadytis, or the Holy City,—as he speaks of it as situated in the mountainous part of Palestine, and compares it for beauty and magnificence to Sardis.

‡ Plato was born about the time Herodotus visited Jerusalem; that is, toward the close of the government of Nehemiah.

that of another, as widely known as theirs, but with an eminence as bad as theirs was good.

Cleopatra in Jerusalem! With equal facility she could assume almost any guise. She had sought in every way to injure Herod; now she appears in his capital, with her hate changed to love,—her hate and her love alike deadly.

It is not unlikely that when Herod parted from Antony, having attended him some distance on his way to Armenia, Cleopatra notified him of her intended visit. He received her with great splendor. Possibly she was entertained in the palace of the Maccabees, (for Herod's new palace was not yet built,) and Mariamne was the hostess, the fair entertainer. The rank of Cleopatra, her descent from the line of the Ptolemies, (the successors in Egypt of Alexander the Great,) her high position as Queen of Egypt, in some measure served as a screen to shield her from just infamy; and one of the purest of women received under her roof one of the vilest and most corrupt. Cleopatra, from the palace, from the Court of the Gentiles, from the stately causeway that connected Zion's hill with Mount Moriah, possibly from Olivet's lovely summit, saw that ancient, that far-famed Temple where the God of the whole earth was worshipped; Cleopatra was in that city which was known throughout the world as the Holy City; Cleopatra saw those sacrifices and witnessed those rites which were associated with and typified the great expiatory sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. Cleopatra stood on the most holy spot on the face of the earth.

She had neither eye nor ear for what was good. When Herodotus was here, he closely examined the city,

with a view to its description in his history; when Plato (as we suppose) visited the same city, the books of Moses and the writings of the prophets engaged his attention. Cleópatra had a capacity hardly inferior to either: her knowledge of languages was very extensive; she was not ignorant either of Hebrew or of the Phenician tongue; but she turned away from every rational inquiry, from the gratification of a laudable curiosity, to the lowest pleasures. She felt, or feigned, love to Herod. His personal qualities and appearance attracted her admiration. With unblushing audacity, she who had so long sought his life now openly sought to lure him into the same net in which Antony had been taken. Those charms were the same, that wit was the same, as when in her royal galley she sailed down the river Cydnus to Tarsus, purposed in her heart to win and enchain Antony. Herod was not addicted to lasciviousness. If he did not repulse her advances rudely, he studiously avoided them. Her unabashed boldness—for she took no pains to conceal her wanton regard—filled him with disgust; though policy led him to hide it under great external respect and courtesy.

Herod, fearing her love as much if not more than he did her hate, took counsel with his friends whether, as she was now in his power, he should not put her to death. He thought it would be greatly to Antony's advantage if he did; for his friendship to Antony was sincere and strong. Accept her love he would not; to refuse it seemed as if it would expose him to no small hazard. His friends, however, strongly dissuaded him from so rash a step. Her death, they thought, Antony would never forgive. Herod allowed himself to be influenced by

their advice. He continued, therefore, to entertain her with the greatest hospitality and magnificence, farmed of her the gardens of Jericho, and, when she went away, attended her across the desert as far as Pelusium, the eastern frontier city of Egypt. Here they separated, to see each other no more. Her end was near at hand, —though she was not yet thirty-five years of age. Octavius and Antony were now soon to contend for the mastery of the world; and the defeat of Antony was to be soon followed by his death and that of Cleopatra.

CHAPTER III.

HEROD PREPARES TO JOIN ANTONY AGAINST OCTAVIUS CÆSAR.

FOR two years the storm was preparing ere it actually burst; and Actium was added to Philippi and Pharsalia. One by one the great leaders of those times passed away. Like actors on the stage, they performed their parts and then disappeared. The passions were the same, the prize for which they contended was the same, the scene was the same; only there were new auditors and new actors. The wail that went up from one generation was soon succeeded by the wail of the next; and through blood and tears, and scenes of civil discord, the principal performers ascended the dizzy pinnacle, glittering for a moment in the bright but tran-

sient sunlight of earthly power and greatness. Cæsar and Pompey had come and gone in their might; Brutus and Cassius had followed, with the multitude of others who had fought in the same lists with them; and now, from opposite points of the horizon, two new combatants are seen, followed by great fleets and mighty armies, to contend for the dazzling prize already won and lost so often.

The vast lists are set. Here is the arena. The champions are about to enter. The interests of the greater part of the civilized world are involved; nearly the whole world are anxious spectators. What are the contests at Olympia, or on the isthmus, to this?

One of the assigned or pretended causes of the war on the part of Octavius was the treatment of his half-sister* Octavia by Antony. After Antony's return from his Parthian expedition, Octavia his wife was anxious to rejoin him, and, having obtained her brother's consent, set out for Athens. Cleopatra, hearing of this, used every artifice to prevent a reunion: she feared lest Octavia might regain her ascendancy over Antony. Antony at this time was absent from Alexandria, busily preparing for a second expedition to Parthia; but learning, by letters and certain female confidants of Cleopatra, that their mistress was dying of grief on account of their separation, he returned. He also sent word to Octavia not to proceed farther,—assigning as a reason his second expedition. Octavia was deeply mortified; but she submitted and returned to Rome. This,

* The mother of Octavia was Ancharia, of Octavius Cæsar, Attia; the father of Octavius was of the same name,—Octavius.

with other causes, Octavius used to excite the people against Antony; and at length war was declared.

Among those who were foremost to aid Antony on this occasion was Herod. Rising above his domestic griefs,—for his grief occasioned by the supposed infidelity of Mariamne was deep and bitter and rankled long in his heart,—he actively prepared for the approaching contest. War had not yet been formally declared; but the signs were too portentous to admit of any doubt that it was close at hand. Indeed, Brutus had foreseen this issue from the first, and had said Antony would rue the day he sided with Octavius. The present state of things was proof of this.

Herod's affairs were now very prosperous. For seven years the land had been at rest and the country free from civil broils. The land, always richly productive, had rewarded the labors of the husbandman; the labor of the olive had not failed; oil and corn and wine overflowed. Herod had imposed heavy taxes; but the people out of their abundance had been enabled to pay them. When we consider the amount of wealth Herod had already accumulated out of the products of so small a country, in how princely a manner he entertained Octavius Cæsar and that portion of his army which he kept under arms after the battle of Actium,* what a splendid gift† he made Octavius himself on his return from Egypt after the death of Antony, we

* Octavius disbanded the greater part of his own forces, and those of Antony's that came over to him, after the battle.

† He made Octavius a present of eight hundred talents, which he greatly needed at the time.

must conclude that Herod, a proficient in the art of war, understood also the art of turning the various resources of the country he governed to the best advantage. The two little gardens of balm at Jericho must have been in themselves a revenue; and though Cleopatra had the use of them for a while, it was not long. The value of the productions of that favored soil it is impossible to calculate. We know that, under the peculiar smile of the Almighty, when the Sabbatic year came round, the yield of one year—that preceding the Sabbatic year—was fully sufficient for three years. In certain parts of Palestine the wool—the fleece of their flocks, especially of the numerous flocks that spread themselves over Mount Gilead*—was of the finest description; while the cities of Phenicia, especially Tyre and Sidon, which were wholly commercial cities, with but a narrow strip of land annexed to them, were glad to draw from so rich a soil what they needed for the sustenance of their artisans and tradesmen. But, from whatever sources the wealth of the land came, Herod had turned all to the best account: so that, at the time of the war between Antony and Octavius, Herod was able to render efficient assistance to his friend and supporter. Besides his infantry, he had a large body of horse; and both infantry and horsemen were well armed and in a good state of military discipline. Herod was one who never left to chance what could be provided for by previous forecast and the most exact attention and diligence. The length of time that passed while both sides prepared for the great and eventful issue enabled Herod

* Sol. Song, iv. 1.

to make the fullest preparation. His hosts, with their standards, were quartered not in the cities, but encamped in the open plains,—called, in the language of the country, the wilderness; that is, large plains of arable and pasture land, away from cities and villages.

It is probable about this time was completed a work on which Herod bestowed great labor, and which must have cost an immense sum. We refer to the completion of the celebrated fortress of Massada. In the commencement of Herod's reign the times were so threatening, both at home and abroad, that he appears to have been led to construct this almost impregnable fortress as a place of refuge in case of urgent danger. He had already availed himself of it for this purpose, as we have seen, when driven by Antigonus and the Parthians from Jerusalem. It was first built by Jonathan, brother of Judas Maccabeus, during the Greek-Syrian wars; but Herod had since his accession greatly enlarged and strengthened it, making it, like the palace of the Maccabees, both a palace and a fortress.

The situation of it was on the western shore of the Lake Asphaltites, or the Dead Sea,—that singular sheet of water, embedded amidst the dreariest mountains, the deepest and most profound solitude. No bark ever navigated that sea. As if by one consent, it appeared to be shunned by all. To the Jews its mysterious waters were a subject of awe and wonder; below its heavy and gloomy surface, down in its dark depths, lay those five cities of the plain which for the abominable wickedness of their inhabitants were destroyed by fire sent upon them from heaven. The whole sheet of water was a memento, sad and severe, of the wrath

of God. On the western shore of this sea—overlooking it—rose the fortress of Massada.

It was built on the top of a very high rock, in the midst of that dreary and desolate region of Judea which extends from the head of the Lake Asphaltites along its whole extent. At the narrow outlet, where the Jordan enters, pouring its silvery stream into this dark, heavy mass of waters, there the wilderness begins. A little way from the margin of the lake rise the mountainous declivities, towering upward toward the clear blue sky above. High above all stood the fortress.

To reach the top of the rock on which it was built was no easy task. There were but two paths. He was indeed adventurous who undertook to reach the top by the path that led from the shore of the sea. We are told that this was named, owing to its narrow, winding trail, the *serpent's path*. In some parts there was nothing but a ledge of rocks on which to walk,—so narrow that one had to balance himself as you proceeded, putting now this foot down, now that, as though a juggler were walking on a rope or a wire,—while on each side were yawning chasms, to be precipitated down which was sure and swift destruction. The wild goat might clamber there; but hardly any foot less sure. In the ascent were overhanging precipices at various points, which you could not climb, but were compelled to turn by many a weary and difficult winding. So tortuous, indeed, was this path, that before the top could be reached a *détour* of three or four miles had to be made.

On the other side of the rock the path was not so difficult; but still not easy was the ascent. At the most

narrow part of this path, Herod built a strong tower, so placed as completely to defend it.

The top of the rock presented truly a curious scene. It was not of a small surface, but nearly, if not quite, a mile in circuit. It was a rich, level plain : no soil in any valley or on any plain was so rich. The air was so pure that the provisions deposited by Herod in the fortress were found as fresh and good, when the Romans took it, a hundred years later, as when they were placed there. Herod built a wall of white stone, eighteen feet high and twelve broad, around the entire top ; and on this wall he placed thirty-eight towers, seventy-five feet high. Against this wall were the houses built,—so that from the wall one could pass into the houses or barracks of the garrison. By this means he kept the larger part of the rich plain for cultivation. Herod built also a palace within the fortress, which was defended by four towers, higher even than those on the wall. He dug also cisterns for water out of the rock. As for the palace, it was furnished in a magnificent manner, having, among other luxurious appurtenances, costly baths.

A little before the famous battle of Actium, most probably, this fortress was finished,—this but one of several strong fortresses that Herod possessed in the more southern part of Judea. To build Massada was a great piece of work. Among the materials that were brought to the spot from a distance were great marble pillars, each of a single stone, which sustained, as in the Temple, the range of cloisters that formed part of the buildings connected with the palace. While this fortress was a-building, this solitude was alive with the

hum of men's voices, with the sound of chisel and hammer; its dreariness was dispelled for a little season, and the eagle scared from his nest on the beetling cliff.

Thus much for the solitary and air-built fortress of Massada. Perhaps, while it was in the process of erection, and when he plunged into those deep solitudes, (wounded love seeks solitude,) afar from the noise and bustle of Jerusalem, Herod felt more keenly and grieved more deeply on account of, as he supposed, the false faith of Mariamne. At length, however, reason came to his aid, and, the fancies of a frenzied passion being dissipated, he became convinced of the innocence of Mariamne. What then must have been his grief for that sudden fury which had led him to sacrifice to a groundless jealousy Joseph, his own uncle, the brother of a father whom Herod greatly loved and venerated!

Herod had taken his last look at his fortress; he had bidden farewell to Mariamne; he had left his capital, and had set out to join Antony. Many a day had passed since so gallant a Jewish army had been led into the field. Herod, glittering in armor, headed his troops. A more indomitable soldier or true friend Antony had not in all his legions. Full of martial fire, feeling that he owed his kingdom to Antony, Herod was ready to venture kingdom and life for his friend the Roman triumvir.

He was stopped, with his entire army, while on his way to join Antony, by a message from him that he did not require his assistance in the war against Octavius, but that he wished him to march against Malchus, King of Arabia. This was a sudden change, indeed. Had

Herod been with Antony at Actium, who can tell what would have been the result? When Antony so basely fled, he was just the man to have retrieved the fortunes of the day. With the whole of Antony's land-force unbroken, not even touched, he would not without an effort—as Canidius, Antony's principal general, did—have seen those numerous veteran legions lay down their arms to Octavius. In the unexpected detention of Herod we recognise that secret Power that doeth what He will in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. Octavius was destined to be the sole ruler of the Roman empire, and every thing worked in his favor.

This unexpected change in the direction of Herod's army was brought about by the intriguing disposition of Cleopatra, whose presence and counsels from first to last in his war against Octavius proved to be in the highest degree disastrous to Antony. In the present instance she wished Antony to countermand the march of Herod, and to send him against the Arabians, because Malchus refused any longer to pay tribute for that portion of his dominions which her avarice had extorted as a grant from Antony. This enraged Cleopatra; and, notwithstanding the momentous issue that was now at stake, she induced Antony to order Herod to engage in this war, though much he needed the counsel and support of so able an ally and so faithful a friend. Herod obeyed: several sanguinary conflicts ensued; but in the end the Jewish king was completely victorious.

It was during the course of this war of Herod against the Arabians, and about the time of the battle of

Actium, that the dreadful earthquake in Judea happened,—an earthquake such as had not before been known within that sacred territory. Some thirty thousand persons perished by the fall of houses, buried in the ruins. The earthquake shook the land. The whole country was filled with dismay, and the report went forth to the neighboring nations that the desolation was complete,—that scarce any were left alive. But the loss of life was in the cities. At the time of the earthquake, Herod and his army were encamped in the open fields: not one of his soldiers was killed: only the tents were overthrown by the quaking of the earth,—“the earth reeling to and fro like a drunkard,” “the earth being moved exceedingly.”*

CHAPTER IV.

THE SECT OF THE MAGI.

WHEN we recollect the part the Magi—or Wise Men of the East, as they are called, (and the expedition of Antony against the Parthians brings them to view, for the Parthians belonged to this sect)—took at the birth of Christ, a desire naturally arises to trace their steps and to follow them to the distant region whence they emerged. A knowledge of the sect of the Magi, as

* Isa. xxiv. 19, 20.

they existed for a long series of years in the East, readily satisfies this desire, and would seem completely to remove all the obscurity of the transaction from the mind.

In the reign of Darius Hystaspes, fourth King of the Persian Empire, in consequence of whose edict the *second* Temple was completed, as has already been mentioned in this work,* arose Zoroastres, the reformer and new founder of this sect. His early history is unknown; and an obscurity rests upon him somewhat like that which rests upon his distinguished disciple Pythagoras; for it was from Zoroastres that Pythagoras derived his knowledge of the immortality of the soul which he introduced into Greece. Zoroastres is thought by some to have been a Jew, and even a disciple of Daniel; but this conjecture is founded on the almost exact resemblance between the leading tenets and rites of the Jewish religion and those of the Magian religion. On this point nothing certain is known. The Magian religion, however, as established by Zoroastres, is little else than the Jewish religion. The sacrifices were the same; and there was the same distinction of beasts into clean and unclean. The fires that burned on his altars were regarded as sacred fires, like that which burned on the Jewish altar,—the founder of the sect of the Magi claiming that his fire came down from heaven. The wood that was laid on the altar of the fire-worshippers, as they are mistakenly called, was as carefully stripped of the bark, and as rigidly inspected to see if it was perfectly sound and

* See Book IV. p. 87.

good, wholly free from worms and any alloy that might defile it, as that which consumed the Jewish sacrifices. The different sacerdotal orders—those of priest, Levite, and high-priest—were the same; and they were set apart for the worship of God, and provision by tithes made for them, as among the Jews. Zoroastres taught that there was but one God, underived, self-existent, eternal, the Creator and Sustainer of the world and of all creatures. They did not regard fire, or the Sun, as God, any more than did the Jews, believing simply that fire—and especially the sun—merely symbolized the Divine presence. As the Israelites saw God in the pillar of fire by night in the wilderness, so God was present to the minds of the Magi in the fire that blazed on their altars, or in that great luminary of the sky, the sun. Akin to their doctrines of one indivisible God was their belief in the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the dead, and future rewards and punishments, just as those doctrines are taught in the Jewish Scriptures. As for their sacred book, the Zendavesta,* the greater portion of it is a transcript of the Sacred Scriptures. Here you meet with the history of Abraham and Joseph; while nearly all of the Psalms are to be found here. The history of the creation of the world and of man is told in the Zendavesta of Zoroastres, as by Moses: so that, with but slight variation, under another name, the Jew's religion was in fact the religion of the Persian Empire in the height

* This word, Zendavesta, means a fire-kindler. See *Prid. Con.* part I, under the year B.C. 486. From this work are drawn these succinct particulars of the Magian religion.

of its greatness, when it stood forth as the second universal empire, known as that of the Medo-Persian,—so clearly described and so exactly foretold by the prophet Daniel.

It would have been strange indeed if the chief topic of the Zendavesta, as taken from the sacred writings of the Jews, had escaped the notice of the Magi, the priests and doctors of this remarkable sect. Valuable as is the history that the Zendavesta drew from the Sacred Scriptures, sweet and beautiful as was the poetry, sublime as were the doctrines, (both taken from the same unpolluted source,) the glorious future of our world is the chief theme of these wonderful writings, and is interwoven in every portion of them. To careful readers, especially to readers taught of God and illuminated by the Holy Spirit,—from whose minds “the vail”* has been taken away,—this could not but be seen. And among the sect of the Magi, as among the Jews, were some such readers. Receiving their books as divine, as the Jews did, often, doubtless, did the Magian priest ponder on the vision of Balaam, and ask himself of this STAR that was to arise out of Jacob, and the Governor that was to proceed from Israel. The glory that was to cover the earth at some far-distant day could not fail to associate itself with the promise to Abraham that *in his seed would all the nations of the earth be blessed*. The dark side of time all could see and feel: its bright future was anticipated by comparatively few; but among these, in every age, as among the Jews,

* “Until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old Testament, which veil is done away in Christ.”—2 Cor. iii. 14.

were, no doubt, more or less of the Magi, emphatically the *Wise Men of the East*. Here just now we leave them. The roseate hue of day begins already to tinge the distant horizon: soon the sun itself will arise, dispersing the darkness, and forever removing the veil which shrouds the nations of the earth.

Book Eighth.

BATTLE OF ACTIUM.

PROEM.

TWENTY-SIX years have passed since Antony commenced his military life in Judea. He was then possibly not much, if any, over twenty-six years of age. We know that previous to the year of the Catiline conspiracy (that is, six years before he appeared in Judea) he had been expelled from his father's house in consequence of his extravagance and his debts. This could hardly have occurred before he was twenty years of age, and would make him, when he was first invited by Gabinius to join him in Syria, at least twenty-six years old.*

After the death of his father, Antony's mother married Cornelius Lentulus, who was slain by order of the Senate as one of the conspirators in the Catiline conspiracy, on that memorable day when Cicero was hailed as the saviour and second founder of Rome. Lentulus, the stepfather of Antony, was the first who was conducted by Cicero along the *Via Sacra*, through the forum, thence to the prison, and there delivered into the

* See Proem to Book IV. of this work, p. 71.

hands of the executioner. On that day Rome was saved from fire, slaughter, and rapine.

Antony was most unhappy in his early associations. His manners were pleasing; and he attracted at an early age the notice of Curio, a man given to every vicious excess, and of unbounded prodigality. He encouraged Antony to follow in his steps, and became his security for two hundred and fifty talents. Next Clodius, one of the most infamous of men, attached him to his interest; but Clodius was so audacious an innovator that Antony was glad after a time to leave Rome for Greece. From Greece, as we have seen, upon the invitation of Gabinius, he passed into Syria and took the command of his cavalry. *Then followed his first campaign in Judea.*

After the lapse of two or three years, returning, probably with Gabinius, to Rome, he was led by the influence of Curio to join Cæsar instead of Pompey. As a tribune of the people, he rendered Cæsar important services. As the crisis approached, Antony and Cassius left the city in disguise, fleeing as for their lives to Cæsar's camp. Antony accompanied Cæsar in his march upon the city. While Cæsar was in Spain, he left Antony in command of the army in Italy. At the battle of Pharsalia, Cæsar gave Antony the command of the left wing of his army, showing his high appreciation of his abilities as a general. In this war Antony and Gabinius once more fought side by side. While Cæsar pursued Pompey into Egypt, Antony, having been appointed general of the horse, (which, in the absence of Cæsar, gave him the supreme power,) returned to Rome. And now his excesses knew no bounds. All Rome resounded with his revellings, as Alexandria did

afterwards. He plunged into every species of intemperance and debauchery. Players and buffoons were his boon-companions: an actress by the name of Cytheris held the sway over his heart which afterwards Cleopatra possessed. His manner of life gave great offence in Rome; for all virtue had not quite fled that city.

It was Antony who, at the feast of the *Lupercalia*,—as Cæsar sat in the rostrum in the Forum, arrayed in his triumphal robe,—wreathing laurel into the shape of a diadem, attempted thrice to place it on his head. Cæsar, carefully noting the feelings of the populace, each time refused it, but with ill-disguised reluctance. As thrice Cæsar turned aside from this tempting emblem of kingly power, the people rent the air with their shouts.

After the death of Cæsar and the expulsion of Brutus and Cassius from the city, Antony for a little season was supreme in Rome. He was in possession of absolute power. But when Octavius came, though but a mere lad, not yet eighteen years of age, he contrived to dispossess Antony of his power and to expel him from the city. This was effected mainly by the influence of Cicero, who persuaded the Senate and people of Rome to espouse the cause of Octavius and to declare Antony a public enemy. And now Antony in his turn, like Brutus and Cassius, is a proscribed felon and traitor. Driven from the city, he soon collects an army, but is defeated by the consuls Hirtius and Pansa, who had been ordered to drive him out of Italy.

Antony was now reduced to great straits. In crossing the Alps, he and his soldiers were in great want. He who lately lived so luxuriously was content with the most meagre fare. During this brief season of

adversity he was another man. The lesson was severe; and while it lasted it was useful. "In adversity," says Plutarch, "Antony was almost a virtuous man." Ere long, however, by a reunion of his forces with those of Lepidus, he again became formidable; and Octavius, soon finding that Cicero's object was the restoration of the commonwealth, made overtures to Antony and Lepidus. These were gladly accepted; and the three proceeded to divide the empire of the world among them.

The three met on an island in the river Rhine. For three days they conferred together. Each had enemies who were friends or relations of the others. The friends of Octavius were the enemies of Antony; the enemies of Octavius were the friends of Antony. Antony demanded of Octavius Cicero. For three days the young man hesitated, but at length consented to the death of him whom he had saluted, not long since, by the title of "father," and to whom he owed his present power. Octavius, on his part, demanded the life of Lucius, the uncle of Antony, his father's brother. Three hundred of the principal citizens of Rome were proscribed at this direful conference; and though at first Octavius showed some reluctance in entering upon this course of blood, when it began he prosecuted it with more unrelenting severity than either Lepidus or Antony. The death of the illustrious Cicero seemed in some measure to satiate the thirst of Antony for blood. His hatred to this eminent man was hardly appeased by his death. At the sight of the head and hand of Cicero, he expressed the greatest satisfaction and joy. When we think of his own death, we can hardly avoid recalling those memorable words,—“With what measure ye mete, it

shall be measured to you again." Octavius, when Antony fell into his power, was as relentless as Antony had been toward Cicero. In vain he pleaded for his life; in vain he sought to escape his impending doom. Octavius was immovable.

Since the time of the conference of the new triumvirate, Octavius, Antony, Lepidus, twelve years have swiftly passed away; and now Antony and Octavius are mustering their respective forces. United once, they now prepare to contend with each other for the mastery of the world. As for Lepidus, he has already been conquered by Octavius, and forced to retire to the seclusion of private life.

In the island of Samos,* nearly opposite to Ephesus, amid the various warlike preparations both by sea and land, Antony and Cleopatra (having passed over from Ephesus to Samos) pursued the same festive life as ever. "The whole tribe of players and musicians were ordered

* The island of Samos, separated by an arm of the sea from the coast of Asia, is of small extent,—but little over fifty miles in its entire circuit. It was anciently an island of celebrity,—the abode of philosophy and the arts. Here lived famous sculptors. This island was the birthplace of Pythagoras. Here Juno is said to have been born, on the banks of the Imbrasus. It was one of the ships of Samos that was driven by stress of weather beyond the Pillars of Hercules and first discovered the island of Tartessus, on the coast of Iberia, then rich in gold. On this island was a temple dedicated to Juno, celebrated for its antiquity and size. Under the tyranny of Polyrates, the pleasures of Sardis were transferred to the city of Samos: the taint spread, and completely corrupted the simple manners of the Samians. A society was formed here, similar to the one in Sardis, called *the flowers*, (Antony and Cleopatra's society of the *inimitable* was formed perhaps after this model,) whose object was to introduce new forms of pleasure,—both sexes giving and receiving lessons of intemperance and passing their days and nights in feasting and debauchery." Anacharsis' Travels in Greece, vol. vi. p. 263.

to repair to Samos; and, while almost the whole world was venting its anguish in groans and tears, that island alone was piping and dancing.”* The play was nearly over. Life had been one long holiday with Antony; for, except a few battles and a little hardship, he had been more of a harlequin and a jester than a man. He was now somewhere about fifty-six years of age; he had a most serious war on his hands; his empire and his life were at stake; but all was mirth and feasting. The hoarse murmur of the coming storm was heard; but the *inimitable* heeded it not. From Samos Antony and Cleopatra went to Athens, where the same scenes were enacted. The best friends of Antony were extremely desirous that he should send Cleopatra back to Alexandria. Antony would have done so; but Cleopatra, dreading in this case a reconciliation between Antony and Octavia, overruled Antony’s better judgment. She bribed Canidius, Antony’s chief general, to persuade him to let her remain,—especially as she had furnished so large a sum of money and so numerous a fleet toward the war. Many an adherent of Antony’s went over to Octavius on her account; and Antony, being ruled by her advice, resolved upon a sea-fight,—a resolution that proved fatal to his fortunes. An old soldier of Antony’s, whose body was covered with scars, pointing to those scars, said, “Why will you, general, distrust these honest wounds, and rest your hopes on those villanous wooden bottoms? Let the Egyptians and Phœnicians skirmish at sea; but give us at least the land; for there it is that we have learned to conquer

* Plutarch’s Life of Antony.

or to die.”* In vain the veteran spoke. There was Cleopatra. She was a spell upon even his military tactics. She unnerved his arm, and unpoised his judgment. There were moments, no doubt, when Antony would gladly have broken his chains; but he lacked the power. Like Prometheus bound fast to the rock, the vulture might eat out his bowels; but he could not move. There was nothing left for him but to die ignominiously.

At length the season of action arrived. Antony left the Piræus, the harbor of Athens, with five hundred armed vessels; while Octavius with his fleet left the harbors of Taurentum and Brundisium. The two fleets came in sight of each other not far from Actium; but, by a stratagem of Antony's, who was unprepared for fight, no collision took place. Antony steered for Actium,—a small city on the south side of the Ambracian Gulf, in Epirus. Here his vessels were moored or drawn up on shore. His infantry arrived afterward. Octavius on his side seized on Tyrone, a place also in Epirus. The two armies faced each other, one on the south, the other on the north, of the gulf. Antony's land-force consisted of nineteen legions, or one hundred thousand infantry, and twelve thousand horse; Octavius had the like number of horse, but of infantry twenty thousand less than Antony. On the day of the battle, which was fought before the mouth of the Ambracian Gulf, in the Ionian Sea, both armies were drawn up in battle-array on opposite sides of the straits entering this gulf. “Antony's land-forces were commanded by Canidius, and Octavius' remained quiet on the shore, under the command of Taurus.”†

* Plutarch's Life of Antony.

† Ibid.

After so much preparation, one would naturally look for some signal display of arms; but Antony, yielding to Cleopatra, in spite of the advice of his general Canidius, had resolved, as we have said, to decide the contest on the sea. In the midst of the action, ere victory had declared for either party, ere a single vessel was lost or taken, and while over two hundred thousand men remained inactive spectators, standing on the adjacent shore, "Cleopatra's sixty ships* on a sudden hoisted their sails, and fairly took to flight through the midst of the combatants." Antony, seeing this, and losing sight of every thing else,—of the battle that raged so furiously and on the issue of which all his hopes rested,—made after her in a small galley, accompanied only by two of his followers. Cleopatra saw him coming, the prow of his vessel swiftly cutting the waves, stopped her royal galley, which was called *Antonias*, and Antony came on board. Neither spoke to the other; and Antony sat at the head of the ship for three days, with his face buried in his hands. Meanwhile the fight continued till four o'clock in the afternoon, (it began at mid-day,) when the victory remained with Octavius, who took three hundred ships. The whole of Antony's land-force was yet untouched; but the desertion first of Antony, and not long after of Canidius, led it, after a few days, to surrender. In honor of this victory, Octavius built in that neighborhood a new city, called Nicopolis,—that is, the city of victory.

* From two hundred they were reduced to sixty just before the fight. The rest were burned.

Antony and Cleopatra, as they sailed around Peloponnesus, stopped at Tenarus. Here the two were brought to speak to each other, and to renew their former intercourse: here, too, he was told of the result of the battle by some of his friends who had escaped, and who came to Tenarus. From Tenarus Antony sailed for Libya, in Africa. Evil tidings awaited him here; for his troops, with their commander, had revolted to Octavius. Oppressed by melancholy, Antony retired with but two attendants (one of the two was Lucilius,* whose life he had saved at the battle of Philippi) to a desert, while he sent Cleopatra into Egypt. After a little, however, he rejoined her in Alexandria. Here the two spent the winter together; while Octavius, having settled the affairs of Greece and Lesser Asia, took up his winter quarters in the island of Samos.

CHAPTER I.

THE RETURN OF THE AGED KING HYRCANUS FROM BABYLONIA, AND HIS DEATH.

OUR readers will recollect that when Herod fled for his life from Jerusalem, and, placing his family in Masada, as a place of refuge, departed for Rome, Hyrcanus

* This Lucilius was a noble man. At the battle of Philippi, to favor the escape of Brutus, he assumed his name and suffered himself to be taken. Antony saved him; and he was so grateful that he attended him to the last.

was carried away captive by the Parthians into Babylonia. Bound with fetters, the poor old king was cast into prison, until Phraates* ascended the throne. This king, cruel to every one else, was kind to the aged Jewish monarch, released him from imprisonment, and treated him with great respect. Ever since the days of the Captivity the Jews had been very numerous in the country beyond the Euphrates. At the period of our history the Jews in Babylonia and the adjacent countries were as numerous as those in Judea. By these Hyrcanus was looked upon as their king, and was held in great honor. Never in his own country did the exiled king receive the same deference as in the land of his captivity; but his heart sighed for the land of his birth. When Herod became king, and the way was opened for his return, he could not be content until he had obtained of the Parthian king permission to return. Herod also was very solicitous for his return; and at length, amid the lamentations of the Jews at Babylonia, he took his departure. Herod received him with the greatest kindness and courtesy, saluted him as his father, and gave him the seat of honor before himself. All was sunshine for a time; and Hyrcanus had no reason to regret the change. It appeared as if he would now die in his nest, and come down to his grave in peace. After so turbulent a life,—doubly so to one of his soft, easy dis-

* Phraates was son of Orodes, who was King of Parthia when Crassus made his fatal expedition against the Parthians. Orodes was listening to a Greek tragedy, when the head of Crassus was brought and laid at his feet. One of the actors took the head in his hand, and made it the subject of mock heroics, to the great delight of the king and all present. Crassus, has it come to this?

position,—his sun, he fondly flattered himself, would set without a cloud.

But about the time of the battle of Actium—some three or four years after the return of Hyrcanus—new difficulties arose. The defeat of Antony looked as if it would be fatal to Herod,—who was one of his warmest partisans. Alexandra, the daughter of Hyrcanus, undeterred by the fate that had befallen her beautiful boy Aristobulus, and conceiving new hopes from the present aspect of affairs, set to work to persuade Hyrcanus to make overtures to Malchus, King of Arabia. The poor old man, ever unable to resist the solicitations of those who were allied to him by the ties of friendship or consanguinity, after considerable resistance, yielded to the importunities of his daughter. A letter was written to Malchus; but the messenger to whom it was intrusted showed it to Herod, who made it the ground of a charge of treason against his government. The letter was laid before the Sanhedrin; and by that body (the members of which were wholly subservient to Herod) Hyrcanus was condemned to death. His execution quickly followed:

This was a most cruel deed. Herod well knew the inert disposition of the old man, and that he had in a sense been coerced into this act by his plotting daughter. What could Hyrcanus, now past fourscore, do to injure him?—one who had always been noted for inactivity, who had seen, more than forty years before, his crown and kingdom taken from him by his younger brother Aristobulus, with hardly a sigh. Well did Herod know this; but he wanted a pretext to put him to death. As Octavius had overthrown Antony, his fears were

awakened anew, and he trembled lest his crown should be transferred by Octavius Cæsar to Hyrcanus. It was the same fear, though in a new form, which impelled him to the murder of the grandson, that now led him to prefer this silly charge against the good Hyrcanus and to put him to death. His throne, how it haunted him! What had he to fear from the youthful Aristobulus or the aged grandsire? In both cases his fears were, for the most part, groundless: it was the spectre jealousy that had again crossed his path. The dark, flowing ringlets of Aristobulus and the silvery hair of Hyrcanus were both offerings to the same fell demon,—lest, forsooth, upon some unexpected contingency, little likely to occur, so far as either of these two persons were concerned, they should dispossess Herod of his throne. Thus died Hyrcanus, the friend of Herod's father Antipater in youth, his playmate in childhood, his companion and patron in after-years. Antipater's fidelity and friendship to Hyrcanus, his king, shows in sad contrast with the dark, insidious, cruel policy of the son.

The second chapter of the first book of this history, the reader will recollect, opened with the night-flight of Hyrcanus from the city of Jerusalem, in company with Antipater, the father of Herod,—Herod himself then a mere child,—and others.* Since then, thirty-five years have passed away,—eventful years, years of great changes. Pompey then was in the zenith of his fame and power; Cicero lived then,—next to Demosthenes, the prince of orators; Crassus was known at that time as the richest and meanest man in Rome; Julius Cæsar was

just gaining reputation in his province in Spain; the Catiline conspiracy was just then on the verge of explosion, and Catiline sat as a nightmare* on the city. These had all passed away; and Hyrcanus, their contemporary, after surviving them all many years, has departed also. Poor old man! Sad was thy life, sad also thy death. We cannot but think it was a dark day in Jerusalem, and a dark day in the palace, when thou—the last of thy kingly race—wast borne to thy grave. What must have been the feelings of Mariamne! Hyrcanus was her grandsire. He had perished by the hand of her husband, as had also her brother. Gloom upon the city, gloom upon the palace, there was, we doubt not, on that day. At night, as darkness fell upon the city, one said to another, in a low and tremulous voice, “Hyrcanus is dead.”—“The old king is gone at last.”

CHAPTER II.

HEROD'S INTERVIEW WITH OCTAVIUS CÆSAR IN THE ISLAND OF RHODES.

WHEN Herod heard of Antony's defeat and return to Egypt, he sent trusty messengers to him with words of sympathy and offers of assistance. Upon the first news of his defeat, he did not desert him, like Pinarius

* Mar, from a Rabbinical word, meaning an evil spirit. See Webster.

Scarpus, Governor of Libya, and commander of his forces in those parts.* On the contrary, he made him the most generous offers. He said he would assist him with his whole army; and if he could not maintain himself in Egypt he should find a shelter within the walls of Jerusalem. He was ready to run every risk for his sake; but he must first slay Cleopatra. Cleopatra dead, he thought it not unlikely he might make a composition with Octavius; but, while she lived, any attempt at assistance would be unavailing. Antony refused to listen to the proposals of Herod; and then Herod resolved to seek, if possible, a reconciliation with Octavius.

Ere this, however, the spring had nearly arrived,† and Octavius, having through the winter been called to Italy by a mutiny of his soldiers,‡ had on his return, (he was gone hardly thirty days,) instead of proceeding to Samos, stopped at Rhodes. Herod, hearing of this, resolved to proceed to Rhodes.

He set sail, and had a favorable voyage, coasting along the island of Cyprus, in view of Paphos, the favorite shrine—as the mythology of the heathen fancied—of Venus, or Cytherea,—where was her most famous temple,§ in which offerings were presented to her from every quarter of the earth, and where the highest efforts of human genius both on the part of the sculptor and painter had contributed to make the goddess the

* This desertion affected Antony so much that when, upon his arrival in Africa, he first heard of it, it was with difficulty he was restrained from killing himself.

† The battle of Actium was fought on the 2d of September.

‡ Suetonius, *Life of Cæsar Augustus*.

§ As that of Minerva was at Athens, that of Jupiter at Olympia, and that of Diana at Ephesus.

model of human beauty.* The soft breezes that blow over this lovely island gently fanned the sails of Herod's vessel as they wafted him on his way. It was a voyage to him of no common import. His friends, those who were most truly attached to him, entertained but little hope of his success; his enemies secretly rejoiced at his expected downfall. Herod did not wait for Octavius to come to him: he resolved to anticipate his coming and boldly to face the storm. His crown, his kingdom, his life, were at stake.

Soon the high walls and towers of the far-famed city of Rhodes were seen. Not under the vast colossal statue that once bestrode the harbor did he sail (two hundred years before this, a great earthquake had cast it to the ground) as he entered the port. He disembarked; he passed through the great gates of the city; he walked through its streets, with its houses not of brick, but of stone; he passed its temples and theatres. He breathed the pure air of that favored isle; he walked beneath its clear, sunny sky. Not a trellice, not a portico, that was not covered with roses. He asks an audience of Octavius: it is granted. On this interview all depends. Herod had been at Rhodes before, as our readers will remember. He stopped here on his way from Alexandria to Rome. The Rhodians were skilled in ship-building; and Herod at that time built a vessel here in which to prosecute the remainder of his voyage. He also, with his usual generosity, though in depressed circumstances himself, assisted the islanders; for they

* Praxiteles, the famous sculptor, and Apelles, the painter, had adorned by their works her temple.

had suffered greatly from the exactions of Cassius. Herod was therefore among friends: there were those who were deeply interested in the issue of his present visit.

The city of Rhodes, we are told, was built in the shape of an amphitheatre; that is, from an area answering to the stage and pit of a theatre its streets and houses rose one above another,—in the form, however, not of a half but a complete circle:* only in one part of it the ground slanted toward the shore of the sea. Numerous colossal statues adorned the city; and all its principal buildings were in a style of imposing grandeur and strength. It must have been a grand sight to stand in the centre of the city and to cast your eye at the buildings that rose up around you,—as it was to stand in the centre of the Coliseum at Rome and to see a hundred thousand human faces looking down upon you. You could not be in the city and not recall the names of Parrhasius and Protogenes, and other names memorable in Grecian annals, of the poets Timocreon and Anaxandrides, and of the sage Cleobulus.†

The presence of so distinguished a personage as Octavius Caesar imparted no ordinary interest to the city at this time. The arrival of Herod, the friend of the Rhodians, was soon known. How will the meeting end? was one of the topics of general discourse. To Herod was the city to be a tomb or a prison? On the day appointed he presented himself before Octavius Cæsar.

* It must have borne in this respect some resemblance to Petra, the ancient capital of Herod's ancestors.

† Anacharsis' Travels, vol. vi. p. 212.

When he entered the hall of audience, he took off his diadem; but in other respects he did not demean himself as a suppliant. He with sufficient deference, yet boldly, avowed himself the friend of Antony, and hid nothing of what he had done, or was prepared to do if Antony had taken his counsel. What he said was somewhat to this purport:—

“I am not here, Octavius Cæsar, to apologize for what I have done. All I am and have I owe to Antony. For my kingdom and crown I am indebted to his friendship. I was ready to sacrifice all for him. It is true, I was not at Actium; but this was no fault of mine. Antony himself prevented it: he commanded me to march against the Arabians. I sent him corn, money, and auxiliaries. I did what I could, and would gladly have done more. It was little that I did to what I ought to have done.* After his defeat I did not forsake him. I offered to stand by him to the last if he would slay Cleopatra: my walls,† my towers, my army, I placed at his disposal. He would not listen to me. When I found this to be the case, I felt myself at liberty to come to you and offer a friendship which he refused. If you will accept it, you will find me as true to you as I have been to him,—as faithful in my new friendship as I have been in my old.”

Having thus spoken, Herod gave his diadem to Octavius, leaving it to his option to retain or return it. Octavius, struck with admiration at the magnanimity of

* Plutarch, in his *Life of Antony*, says that among the kings who did not attend in person at Actium, but sent supplies, was “Herod of Judea.”

† Joséphus, *Jewish War*, book i. chap. 20, sect. 1.

the man, "restored him his diadem again,"* and said, "He gladly accepted his friendship; that Antony, in preferring Cleopatra to him, had done well; for by this means he (Octavius) had gained a friend, such a one as he well knew how to prize."† As for his kingdom, he was worthy to reign; and he would insure it to him anew by a decree of the Senate and people of Rome. He also engaged to add to his dominions.

Thus ended the interview; and from that day, next to Agrippa and Mæcenas, Herod held the highest place in the regards of Octavius Cæsar. Herod returned home with a joyful heart; but as he ascended the white marble steps that led from the north of the Temple to his palace, a dark shadow fell upon his spirit, and fearful presentiments of evil cast their long, spectral shadows far before. One face was averted from him as he entered his palace, one heart rose up in unrestrained indignation against him,—that of Mariamne.

The reason of this we must now explain.

Before Herod left for Rhodes, fearing the machinations of Alexandra, his mother-in-law, he placed her and his wife Mariamne in Alexandrium, one of his fortresses, under the charge of two of his most faithful friends,—friends whose fidelity he had tried in the past,—Sohemus and Joseph. At the same time, he placed his mother and sister in Massada. His younger and only surviving brother, Pheroras, he left in charge of his kingdom, directing him in case he did not return to secure

* Joseph. Antiq. book xv. chap. 6, sect. 7.

† Suetonius tells us Octavius Cæsar was slow in forming friendship, but, when once formed, very steady in his attachments.

it, if possible, for himself. Unhappily, he also directed Sohemus and Joseph, should he be taken off by Octavius, to slay Mariamne and her mother. He could not endure the thought that Mariamne should survive him. He enjoined, however, the strictest secrecy upon them.

Both Mariamne and her mother felt themselves to be prisoners, confined in a remote fortress. In the solitude of her prison, as she regarded it, (Alexandrium was splendidly furnished as a palace also,) Mariamne revolved the former injunctions of Herod to his uncle Joseph, and her curiosity was awakened to learn whether he had left similar orders now. The danger was even greater now than then; and she strongly suspected that Sohemus had received the same fatal order as Joseph. At first Sohemus was faithful; he guarded his dangerous secret well; but he could not long withstand the address of Mariamne. Her smiles, the engaging suavity of her manner, her presents and promises, induced him at length to disclose the fatal secret; and from that hour Mariamne felt supreme aversion to Herod. On his return, she took no pains to conceal her dislike. She would have been glad had he never returned: she had no wish ever to see his face again. Herod, whose love was as a devouring fire, could scarcely endure her conduct. One while, anger would urge to some act of violence; then his love would return, and his anger depart. Nothing he could say,—no grief he showed,—no expressions of attachment,—could move the unalterable purpose of Mariamne; but, forewarned, she kept the cause of her utter dislike closely concealed in her own breast. She heaped upon him the severest reproaches: she accused him of the death of her brother and grand-

father. She flung away from him, when he made any approaches to her, or attempted to show some fond endearment, with unmitigated scorn.

For a year after Herod's return from Rhodes he bore with this treatment. Twice during this period he was absent. When Octavius Cæsar came to Syria on his way to Egypt, he went to Ptolemais to meet him. Here he entertained him and his army in a magnificent style, and likewise provided for the march across the desert to Pelusium.* Again, at the close of the war in Egypt, after the death of Antony, he rejoined Octavius there, accompanying him thence to Antioch. It was after his return from Antioch that the partially-smothered flame burth forth in a blaze. Salome had bribed the cup-bearer of Herod to say that Mariamne had prepared a love-potion for him, cunningly instructing her agent to seize some favorable opportunity to prefer the charge. Once, when Mariamne, with more than usual bitterness and intemperance of spirit, had repulsed Herod, the cup-bearer, watching his time, as a snake in the grass, said that "Mariamne had given him presents and persuaded him to give him a love-potion."† The charge was false, and as base as it was false; but Herod listened to it, and ordered Mariamne's confidential eunuch to be tortured to ascertain the facts in regard to it. The eunuch said he knew nothing of it, but, in the extremity of his agony, confessed that the dislike of Mariamne arose from some communication Sohemus had made. This was enough. The secret was out, and

* See Book VIII. chap. iii. p. 187 of this work.

† Joseph. Antiq. book xv. chap. 9, sect. 4.

Herod knew that Sohemus, on whose fidelity he had depended, had betrayed his trust. All his jealousy was anew aroused; his worst fears, his darkest suspicions,—as he supposed,—were confirmed; and he imputed the disclosure to the criminality of the parties. He at once ordered Sohemus to be slain, and Mariamne to appear before the Sanhedrin. The members of that body condemned her to death, not upon the evidence that was presented, but they saw that Herod expected, indeed, demanded, such a verdict, and they acted accordingly. The trial was a farce: the tribunal did but return the pre-determined conclusion of Herod. As in the case of Hyrcanus, so in that of the grand-daughter, the sentence of the Sanhedrin was both cruel and unjust.

Mariamne is now an inmate of a prison, under sentence of death. No one thought her execution would speedily follow; neither did Herod design this. But Salome, the sister of Herod, whom Mariamne had so deeply offended, gave her brother no rest. She worked upon his fears, and induced him by her artful insinuations to think the people would rise up against him,—that neither his life nor kingdom was safe if Mariamne were permitted to live. Blinded by rage, moved with fear, hurried on by the impetuosity of his nature, torn by various conflicting passions, in an evil hour for his own peace, (not for Mariamne's: life had no longer any attraction for her,) he issued the fatal order. On the day of execution, as Judea's queen, in her yet early womanhood and matchless beauty and grace, was led through the streets of Jerusalem as a common malefactor, her mother Alexandra came forth, and,

before all the people, upbraided her daughter for her treatment of Herod. The violence of her manner corresponded to the abusiveness of her words. The unhappy woman, fearing for herself, took this method to show that she had not participated in the alleged crimes for which her daughter was now about to suffer.

Mariamne was walking slowly along, her mind fully prepared to meet death, when she was thus assailed by her mother. At first she said nothing; but, as her mother continued to tear her hair, wring her hands, and to speak most reproachingly to her, she entreated her from self-respect to desist from such conduct. Then, with an undaunted mien, she walked on as before. Her color did not change. With unfaltering step, and a countenance calm and composed, she approached the block. With the same firmness did she die,—“discovering,” says Josephus, “the nobility of her descent to the spectators even in the last moments of her life.”*

CHAPTER III.

ANNA AGAIN.

MANY, many years have passed since we left Anna the prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher, waiting for redemption in Israel. In all

* Joseph. Antiq. book xv. chap. 9, sect. 4.

the changes that had occurred since then, she had remained faithful at her post. If the constancy of others had wavered, if their love had abated, if their faith had failed,—hers had not. She remained true to the light she had received. Her faith was based on the word of God. The simple declaration of God's holy word resolved all doubts, answered all questions, and put, like the shadows of night before the rising sun, every vain speculation to flight. She stood firmly fixed on that immovable rock,—the word of the High and Holy One that inhabiteth eternity. That omnipotent word, despite incredulity, in the face of every obstacle, would accomplish the promises made to the fathers.

As the time approached,—and it was now not very far off,—her convictions increased, her faith grew stronger. For some sixty years she had heralded the day-spring from on high; and never was her vision so clear and distinct as now. She had no hope for the future of the world, or even of her own people, save through the literal fulfilment of the word of prophecy. The future glory of Israel, and the light of the Gentile world, centred here. Israel was scattered over the earth; but the knowledge of the true God, which they everywhere carried with them and proclaimed, made slight impression on an unbelieving world. In every city a few saw the light, and became proselytes of the synagogue and temple, and breathed the sublime hopes that the Scriptures of truth imparted; but the mass remained unmoved, unaffected, by the testimony of Israel. The light was too pure for them. They did not want to know God. The great body of the Gentile world still sat in darkness and in the shadow of death.

With what deep joy, with what strong faith, did Anna throw herself back upon God's word ! While all around was dark, here was light ; while all seemed dark in the future, here was light. From the beginning of the world she could trace the divine announcement that, sooner or later, this earth would emerge from the darkness with which it was shrouded and be delivered from the misery with which it had been so long afflicted. That which so deeply impressed the mind of the Greek tragic poet Æschylus, "the woes of man, and the crimes which he commits," and from which he saw no avenue of escape, the lettered page of Jewish prophecy had resolved to her mind ; and Anna, taught from above, rejoiced in hope of the glory of the Lord.

Far back in the beginning of the world she read that "the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head."* She had no doubt whence the promised seed was to proceed : she knew that God had said to Abraham that "in him shall all families of the earth be blessed."† God had assured Abraham, in the most positive manner, that in Isaac should his seed be called,‡ and she entertained no doubt that such would be the case. Of the twelve sons of Jacob, not to Joseph, but to the family of Judah, was the promise restricted ; and of this favored line was David, the son of Jesse.§ Henceforward all the prophets spoke of David and of his seed as the hope and desire of the nations of the earth. The son of David was destined to bruise the

* Gen. iii. 15.

† Ibid. xii. 3.

‡ Ibid. xv. 4.

§ Jesse was the son of Obed ; and Obed was the son of the gentle and affectionate Ruth and of Boaz. The story of Ruth ! Has Virgil written any pastoral that will compare with it ?

serpent's head; and when that should take place, God would dwell with man as at the first, and yet more gloriously. While "Leviathan, that crooked serpent,"* possessed so much power, crime and woe would exist; but when his power should be destroyed, then "a king would reign in righteousness, and princes would rule in judgment. And a MAN would be as a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest, as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."† These were the hopes, this was "the expectation," of Anna in her long vigil, and which often cheered her heart when greatly depressed. When the storm raged, when the vessel seemed as if it would be lost, she held by this sheet-anchor: God had said it, and she knew it would be so,—not in a meagre, qualified sense, with more or less of evil mixed with good, (as if evil, if it exist at all, would not preponderate over the good: when has it not done so?) but in the fullest and most absolute sense would righteousness resume its ancient seat on this our earth. Was not this the declaration of the Lord Almighty to his servant Moses?—"But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord."‡

Up to this period of time, far and near had the testimony of Anna gone, even to distant lands. The Jews that came to Jerusalem to worship, from Ethiopia, from the Ægean Isles, from Libya and Cyrene, from the Hellespont, from the Greek cities in Asia Minor, from Greece and Italy, from the remote wastes of Scythia, both converts and native Jews, saw Anna, the

* Isa. xxvii. 1.

† Ibid. xxxii. 12.

‡ Num. xiv. 21.

aged prophetess of Israel, and heard her speak of the coming redemption of Israel. What she said was with authority. She spoke as one who knew what was about to transpire as if it had already happened: and deep and lasting was the effect which her words produced. What she uttered greatly increased and strengthened the general expectation of the near approach OF THE ADVENT OF THE SON OF DAVID.

On the night of the sad day that saw one of Zion's fairest daughters, Judea's queen, the hapless Mariamne, die,—that night Anna watched, as usual, in her chamber in the Temple.* Was she at hand to administer comfort to the imprisoned queen? Mariamne knew Anna, knew her as a prophetess. Did she send for her? We know not. One thing we may be assured of: she had her prayers, her heart-felt sympathy. Perhaps the white-winged dove that had descended upon Anna visited Mariamne in her lonely prison, and made the close of her dark and troubled day one of peace,—a ray of light reflecting long after her sun had set.

* See Book II. chap. ii. p. 38 of this work.

Book Ninth.

DEATH OF ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA.

PROEM.

ÆSCHYLUS, the Greek dramatist, thus speaks of life, —that drama that shifts so often and whose scenes are so illusive :—

“ This is the state of man : in prosperous fortune,
A shadow, passing light, throws to the ground
Joy’s baseless fabric in adversity;
Comes malice with a sponge moisten’d in gall,
And wipes each beauteous character away.
More than the first this melts my soul to pity.”*

Antony was now cooped within narrow limits. His adherents had all fallen off, the kings and princes that waited on his “prosperous fortune” had departed, and naught was left but the friendship of Cleopatra—a broken reed in adversity—and the scanty military resources of Egypt. As if he were resolved to see the play out, the winter that he spent in Alexandria, after the battle of Actium, was given to festivity. Feasting and dancing and music, splendid and most expensive entertainments, filled up the day and were prolonged through the night.

* Æschyl. in *Agam.* p. 1335. Potter’s Translation.

As if life had no higher end, as if the soul would die with the body, and there were no hereafter, the language of these *companions in death*, as Antony and Cleopatra now called themselves, (in the place of the *inimitable lovers*,—their former title,) was the lullaby song of Epicurus:—"Let us fill ourselves with costly wine and ointments; and let no flower of the spring pass by us: let us crown ourselves with rosebuds before they be withered. Let none of us go without his part of jollity: let us leave tokens of our joyfulness in every place, for this is our portion, and our lot is this."*

When Antony first came to Alexandria, in the earlier part of the winter, he appeared in a new character,—that of Timon,—and retired to a house he had built on a mound in the sea, not far from the celebrated light-house or tower of Pharos. As if he were not the cause of his own downfall, he bitterly complained of the desertion of his friends, and affected to be out of humor with all mankind; but he soon grew weary of his solitude and misanthropy, and returned to the city to enjoy yet a little longer the society of Cleopatra.

Cleopatra, as well as Antony, knew she must die,—for she was fully resolved to destroy herself rather than fall into the hands of Octavius and walk as one of his captives in the train of his triumphal procession. She well knew he was very solicitous to preserve her life for this occasion. Cleopatra, the last of the Ptolemies, did not mean to be led a captive to Rome. Part of the winter she spent in ascertaining, by experiment

* Wisdom of Solomon, ii. 7, 8, 9. The Jewish writer gives a just exposé of the effects of the doctrine of Epicurus.

upon various criminals condemned to die, what poisons produced the easiest death. After numerous trials, she concluded that the bite of the asp was accompanied with the least pain,—the senses gradually falling into a lethargy, which was followed by death almost as easily and naturally as if one were gently to fall asleep.

Octavius did not make his appearance in Egypt till the commencement of August. He attacked it on the east side, while Cornelius Gallus, his lieutenant, advanced by Peritonium on the west. Peritonium (on the west side) and Pelusium (situated on a branch of the Nile, on the east) were the two fortresses that defended Egypt from an attack by land. The former was already in the hands of Cæsar's soldiers; while the latter surrendered as soon as Octavius Cæsar appeared before it. Octavius, crossing the Delta, approached Alexandria and encamped near the hippodrome. Antony, sallying forth, fell upon Cæsar's cavalry, routed them, and drove them back to their trenches. This was his last gleam of sunshine. His next attempt was a fight by sea and land,—not expecting to conquer, but seeking an honorable death. To his great mortification, his fleet and army went over to the enemy; and he now saw that he had been completely betrayed by Cleopatra. Soon after this, seeing no hope, and being told Cleopatra was dead, he fell on his sword. Ere he expired, learning that Cleopatra was still alive, he was drawn up by a rope into a monument whither she, with two of her women, and a eunuch, had retired for safety. He lived long enough to see her once more, to speak to her again, and then died. Cleopatra, after vainly trying to propitiate Cæsar, finding that she was to be carried a

prisoner to Rome, applied an asp to her arm,—having first attired herself in a magnificent habit,—and then lay down to die on her golden bed.

The night before Antony was to fight his last battle, he ordered a magnificent entertainment, and took a final leave of his friends. That same night, while the city was buried in perfect silence, a tumultuous noise as of *bacchanals* was heard. Through the whole city the strange, unearthly procession seemed to move, till at length it went out by the gate that led to Cæsar's camp. On the startled ear of night, and of the vast population of this great city, fell the sound of musical instruments that unseen hands played,—a solemn prelude to the eventful morrow.*

With the death of Cleopatra, the reign of the Ptolemies, which had now continued nearly three hundred years,† closed. The first Ptolemy (surnamed Soter, or saviour) was one of the generals of Alexander the Great. To his lot fell Egypt upon the division of the empire; and after a while he took the name of king. Pharos, the celebrated light-house, situated on an island of the same name, was built by him, and the mole that led to it. Egypt flourished greatly under his wise and benignant administration, which lasted for a period of forty years. With various fortune his successors followed,—after a while degenerating from the virtues of the family and becoming noted for cruelty, sensuality, and every vice. Cleopatra closed the scene, and Egypt became a pro-

* Plutarch's Life of Antony.

† Two hundred and ninety-four years, dating from the death of Alexander. Prid. Con., under A.D. 39.

vince of the Roman empire. Cornelius Gallus was the first prefect under the new government.

Alexandria at this time was one of the principal cities of the earth. Here now centred the commerce of the world; for the trade of the East passed through this city. Tyre had yielded its prestige to Alexandria. The palace of the Ptolemies was built fronting the sea, opposite the mole that led to the island of Pharos. The light from the lofty top of that white marble tower, the light-house of Pharos, burnished the waters that slept in tranquil beauty, between the island and the palace, and cast its bright gleam far and near upon the front of the city that faced the water.* Close by the palace was the theatre,† the great library, and the museum, or hall of philosophy. This choice section of the city was allotted to the Jews, who held, along with the original Greek population, the first rank as citizens. City of Alexandria, mart of the earth, seat of science and philosophy, depository of knowledge, thy glory has long since departed; but surely it will return again. A bright future is yet before thee, if “the family of Egypt go up with all the families of the earth to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of Hosts.”‡

* The city of Alexandria was in the form of a parallelogram, which was the shape of the island of Pharos. It was laid out with great regularity, in sections, or squares. It resembled Philadelphia in this respect in its original form: only it was not a perfect square: it was longer than it was broad.

† When Julius Cæsar was besieged in Alexandria, he turned the theatre adjoining the palace into a fortress.

‡ Zech. xiv. 17, 18.

CHAPTER I.

THE CRISIS, OR TURNING-POINT, IN HEROD'S LIFE.

OUR lives take their color from our belief. Our belief may not be expressed in so many words; we may not even be fully conscious of it 'ourselves; perhaps we think we have a very correct belief: nevertheless, as we believe so we live. Every one that lives chiefly with a view to his own advantage or pleasure and not to the glory of God, is an Epicurean in fact, whatever may be his theory. He "reasons with himself, but not aright," after this sort:—"Our life is short and tedious, and in the death of a man there is no remedy: neither was there any man known to have returned from the grave. For we are born at all adventure: and we shall be hereafter as though we had never been: for the breath in our nostrils is as smoke, and a little spark in the moving of our heart: which being extinguished, our body shall be turned into ashes, and our spirit shall vanish as the soft air, and our name shall be forgotten in time, and no man shall have our works in remembrance, and our life shall pass away as the trace of a cloud, and shall be dispersed as the mist that is driven away with the beams of the sun, and overcome with the heat thereof."*

* Wisdom of Solomon, ii. 1-4.

This is, in substance and in effect, the doctrine of Epicurus expressed in eloquent terms by a Jewish author. It embodies also the creed of the Sadducees; for there were Jews that turned away from the light of the sun in mid-heaven and believed, or pretended to think, that there was no other life than this. To them heaven was a sealed book; from the grave there was no way of return. But the great doctrine which lies at the basis of the Jewish covenant is the resurrection of the dead. This gives to futurity an enduring reality, and makes life solemn—"not a pastime, not a market for gain"—by the hopes and fears which it imparts, by the immeasurable interests which it involves.

After the dismal tragedy of Mariamne's death, Herod awoke to a terrible reckoning. His love—always ardent, says Josephus, beyond that of most other men—revived. He would not believe that she was dead. He was carried to the verge of distraction. Indeed, his reason temporarily left him: he spoke to her as if she were yet alive; he summoned her to his presence. He sent his servants to call Mariamne to him. Hardly ever, it has been said, was there such an instance of bitter, unavailing repentance. The agony through which he passed was dreadful: his soul seemed as if it would break with grief, as if it would sink beneath the almost insupportable load. Do what he would, go where he might, he could not banish her image, the fond remembrance of his past joy, from his mind. At first he tried to divert his grief by various kinds of amusements, "contriving feasts and assemblies for that purpose;" but in vain. She in whom his very existence had been bound up followed him everywhere, and her recollection turned every

pleasure into torturing pain. The profoundest gloom, the deepest melancholy, sat upon his spirit continually. It appeared as if his heart would never know pleasure again,—that he would never have another single joyful sensation. His heart was dead to all emotion save that of pain. He found himself, after a while, unable to attend to the ordinary cares of government; and, leaving Jerusalem, he retired to Samaria. It does not appear that he sought refuge in the sanctuary: he did not present to God the sacrifice of a broken spirit. He might have found consolation, forgiveness, here; but he sought it not. In some solitude in the vicinity of Samaria he buried himself, and vented his grief in sighs and tears. Alas that his sorrow was wholly a worldly sorrow, which did not take God into account! At length he fell into a grievous sickness, from which there seemed little prospect of recovery. Medical aid was of no avail. After, however, a considerable length of time, his disease yielded and he began to recover: his grief abated, and he resumed the cares of government. But out of the furnace he came, not as metal softened by the action of the fire, but harder than before. If we may judge by his subsequent life, he now for the most part freed himself from the trammels of his faith—the faith of his fathers—and gave full scope to worldly ambition. He was not satisfied to be known by his cotemporaries, or in history, as a good Jewish king, as one whose chief aim was to preserve in their purity the Mosaic institutions and who sought the prosperity of his people in a strict conformity to the Mosaic law, but he wished to blend (an impracticable task) in one homogeneous texture Jewish and Greek

rites, and to make the Jews more conformable in their manners and spirit to other nations. Blinded by self-love, he thought he acted with great magnanimity when he removed the ancient landmarks, and was greatly pleased with the renown that he acquired from the neighboring nations by the course which he followed. Chiefly he desired to retain the regard of Octavius Cæsar; and we have reason to think that Cæsar had formed no very favorable opinion of the religion of the Jews. In this respect he differed greatly from his great uncle, Julius Cæsar.

It would seem as if this course of Herod's after his recovery was a turning-point in his destiny. What he did was with his eyes wide open, and as if from the most deliberate conclusion of his judgment. To please Cæsar, to gain the honor which cometh from man, he turned away from the strict observance of the law of Moses, not, indeed, literally to worship the gods and goddesses of the heathen, but to imitate, as far as he dared venture, the spirit and practices of the Gentile world. From this time the rites of the Jewish religion were but a secondary object with him: he wished to be regarded as one who had no narrow prejudices, as one who was not trammelled by the rigid, not to say superstitious, exclusiveness of the Mosaic law. (Had the wisdom of the Gentile world led them to the knowledge of God? Bad as the Jews were, where could be found such examples of holy men and women as among them? Some of the worst, the most scandalous, vices of the heathen, we incline to think, were not practised by the Jews.) There was on the part of Herod a wilful departure from the law of his God. Step by step, in a

spirit of worldly compliance, his faith was undermined: he tottered, he fell. He cast away that confidence in God and his word which has great recompense of reward. The clear light of the holy oracle was obscured, till at last a total eclipse of faith followed.

Outwardly Herod is a Jew; inwardly he is not. The divine principle of a living, actuating faith has become extinct.

CHAPTER II.

THE THEATRE IN JERUSALEM.

BEFORE proceeding to the principal topic of this chapter, we must mention another capital punishment that has taken place in Jerusalem. Alexandra has shared the fate of her daughter: what she so often provoked has fallen on her at last. During Herod's sickness, supposing it would be fatal, she engaged in a plot to secure the government to herself, under pretence of preserving the throne for the two sons of Herod and Mariamne, Alexander and Aristobulus.* She attempted to possess herself of the two principal fortresses of the city; but Herod, being informed of her design, sick as he was, sent orders for her execution; and so she perished.

* Herod had three sons and two daughters by Mariamne: one of his sons died when quite young, at Rome.

The stage was now clear. Every member of the old Asamonean family had been put out of the way. Of that illustrious house the two sons of Herod just mentioned, Alexander and Aristobulus, were the only survivors. As if freed from every restraint and fear, Herod now entered upon his new course, and made great innovations in the Jewish state. We propose briefly to notice these innovations and to make some remarks upon them.

We must not, however, suppose that Herod was the first to introduce Grecian practices into the Holy City and among the Jewish people. Long before his time—before the time of the Maccabees—two high-priests had been guilty of the same thing. The first of these was Jason, brother of Onias, third of that name. He obtained by purchase of Antiochus Epiphanes the high-priesthood, to the exclusion of his brother. He also purchased of the Syrian king the right to erect a *gymnasium* in Jerusalem, and encouraged the young men of the principal families of the Jews to contend in these places of exercise, as was common in the Greek cities. The Jewish youth appear to have become passionately attached to these contests of the *athletæ*, “liking the glory of the Grecians best of all.” It was a singular sight, indeed, to see Jews run and wrestle naked in the ring. The priests themselves took part in the same contests, being countenanced by the profane Jason. How the good, the venerators of the law, must have mourned at that sight! Menelaus, who became high-priest in his turn by outbidding Jason, pursued the same course. He even went further. He sent a deputation to Tyre at the time the games in honor of Her-

cules* were performed there, to present an offering to that god. Impiety for a time ran so high that the daily sacrifice was not offered up; the Temple was exchanged by priests and people for the *gymnasium*. But God soon visited his people with tokens of his displeasure. He first forewarned them by fearful sights in the heavens. For forty days in succession, armies were seen contending with each other; men in glittering armor contended with spear, and sword, and buckler, in the broad daylight, on the face of the sky, as before the destruction of Jerusalem.† The people, as they looked on, hoped it might not portend evil; but they did not leave off their wicked practices. Soon wrath came rushing along like a torrent. Antiochus Epiphanes, while in Egypt, hearing that the Jews had rebelled, (which was false,) advanced against the ill-fated city, put forty thousand of its inhabitants to death, and carried the same number into captivity. This was but the beginning of sorrows. Next followed the Antiochian persecution, (so memorable in Jewish annals,) which resulted, through the Maccabees, in the deliverance of the Jews from the Syrian yoke.

During the struggle for freedom, which lasted over thirty years, and the reign of John Hyrcanus that followed, the Jews, taught by adversity, attended strictly to the rites of their religion. Their afflictions served as fire to purify them and to bring them back to God. But upon the death of Hyrcanus, when Aristobulus, his eldest son, ascended the throne, he favored Grecian manners and customs, and on this

* Hercules is the same as Baal, under another name. † 2 Macc. v. 2, 3, 4.

account was eulogized by Strabo for his "candor." After his unhappy death, the bias to Greek customs received a check, till Herod made innovations with a bold, unsparing hand.

Upon Herod's recovery from his dangerous illness, and when his grief for Mariamne had somewhat abated, (slowly did his deep grief and melancholy for one so loved leave him,) then, as we have said, commenced his new course of life. It was at this point he diverged from the customs of his nation, introducing practices totally alien from the Jewish constitution. The words of Menahem the Essene were now completely fulfilled, when, announcing to Herod from God his future elevation as King of the Jews, he said that he would "obtain an everlasting reputation, but would forget piety and righteousness."* His conformity to foreign customs, his participation in the Olympic games, his building temples in honor of Augustus, his introduction of novel spectacles and practices into his own country, were manifest departures from the law of Moses. God had from the beginning fenced the Jews in from other nations, had prohibited intermarriage with them, had strictly forbidden all imitation of their customs. They were called "to be a special people unto himself above all people upon the face of the earth."† They were to be "an holy people unto the Lord their God."‡ In the face of a commandment so express, Herod sought to assimilate the Jews to other nations by the introduction of Greek and Roman practices, by the games of Greece,

* Joseph. Antiq. book xv. chap. x. sect. 5. See also Book I. chap. i. p. 14 of this work.

† Deut. vi. 6.

‡ Ibid.

by theatrical exhibitions, by contests of music and poetry, by shows of wild beasts, by the gladiatorial spectacles of Rome.

Carrying out this plan, (which was prompted by his ambition,—by a desire to extend his reputation as widely as possible,) while he built an amphitheatre outside of the city, he erected a theatre within its walls. The theatre was a magnificent building. Among its adornments were trophies (that is, full suits of armor) of purest gold and silver, placed around the interior of the theatre, in honor of Octavius Cæsar, or, rather, Cæsar Augustus, as he was now called. There were also highly-ornamented inscriptions to Cæsar engraven on the walls of the house; for when dramatic entertainments were given, strangers were invited from the most distant parts; and Herod wished them to see the honor in which Augustus was held by him, as well as to share the glory that would accrue from Cæsar's friendship to himself.

Almost, then, under the shadow of the Temple arose a theatre, as a hundred and fifty years before had been erected a *gymnasium*. In it was a stage, or *proscenium*, a little unlike ours, divided into two parts, one higher, for the actors, the other lower, for the chorus, with a passage leading down into the pit.* Ranged in the form of a semicircle were tiers of boxes, rising one above another, to a vast height, capable of holding many thousands of people. Outside were splendid porticoes,

* This was not occupied by spectators, as it was thought it would injure the sound of the actor's voice. Thespis introduced one actor to alternate with the chorus. Æschylus, "the father of tragedy," introduced a second. It was Sophocles who first admitted a third, and sometimes a fourth.

or colonnades, to which the people could retire in case of rain.

In front, on that part of the stage where the actors declaimed, were houses painted on each side, which represented two principal streets leading in different directions. In the rear of this, the scene varied according to the subject of the play that was to be represented. Suppose the play to be "Iphigenia in Tauris," by Euripides: the scene would be the seashore, "surrounded by steep rocks and deep caverns." Or, if it were "Iphigenia in Aulis," the scene that presented itself to the spectator, as he entered the house, would be a harbor filled with ships, representing the Grecian fleet detained by contrary winds ere it set sail for the siege of Troy. The painter is called in to give as pleasing an illusion as possible to the eye. The principal scene, once arranged, lasts through the piece: It does not change, as with us.

And now appear the chief actors, usually not more than two or three in number,—with the mask, the high-heeled buskin, (if tragedy, but the sock if comedy,) and the rich, long, flowing robe. If the actor represent a king, he wears his diadem studded with jewels, and leans on his eagle-topped sceptre. By the aid of the buskin the actor rises to a gigantic height; his gauntlets also extend the length of his arm; while the brazen mouth of the mask, greatly assisting the voice, enables it to reach the farthest part of the building. Then follows the chorus,* preceded by a flute-player, coming on the stage sometimes singly, "one after the

* The chorus was usually on the stage at the opening of the piece.

other, or three in front and five in depth," either aiding directly in the action or filling up the time between the scenes.*

The performances introduced by Herod into Jerusalem were most probably the master-pieces of Greek literature,—the productions of the most celebrated Greek tragic poets, especially the works of those who hold the first rank, Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. The *Iliad* appears to have been an inexhaustible mine from which the poets freely drew. The ancient traditions of Greece were another fruitful source whence they deduced their themes, like Homer, investing these traditions, these relics of the heroic age, with the rich and varied coloring of the most inventive fancy. The Jewish mind had little in consonance with these traditions, these fables, these relics of the heroic age of Greece, as it is called. Many of these ancient fictions were, no doubt, originally taken from Jewish history; but in the lapse of time, and in the hands of superstition, they had become so distorted as to retain but slight and casual traces of their first form, their true and original character. The doctrine of an irresistible fate which the Greek tragedies teach, (not the doctrine of a wise, just, and merciful Providence,) together with the causeless and capricious vengeance of the gods, is unknown to the Hebrew theology. No one is necessarily impelled to crime. Man is free to choose or to refuse evil. He is a free, conscious agent. He may not be able to define the limits of his own agency,—where

* The chorus appears rather to have been an encumbrance than an aid to ancient tragedy: it was, however, the original vine on which tragedy was grafted.

his own agency begins, and where that of God ends, so that the two wills harmonize and work together for one and the same end, (this theme is too deep for mortals :) nevertheless, he knows himself to be a free, conscious, responsible agent. Here he stops. In the Jewish Scriptures the divine vengeance does not flow from some trivial cause, as in the case of Agamemnon, who brought an endless train of evils upon his house by piercing with his dart unwarily a hind or stag of Diana's. Hence the sacrifice of his daughter Iphigenia, his own death by the murderous hand of his wife Clytemnestra, and that of Clytemnestra by her son Orestes. On this fable is rung a thousand changes by the Greek tragic poets; and little fitted was any such exhibition of the gods to impress the mind with an elevated conception of the Deity. Weak as any mortal, capricious, whimsical, are those gods and goddesses that figure in ancient fiction. And yet the plays portraying them were introduced by Herod into Jerusalem. These crude fancies, these distorted pictures, (the vagaries of the human mind,* and rejected by the Greek philosophers as at war with virtue and truth,) were substituted for the facts of revelation. The mind, forsooth, was to be entertained, to be instructed, with such idle tales as these,—and this assisted by the artificial embellishment of scene, dress, and the most impassioned personations.

But it was not truth that these exhibitions aimed at, but excitement. The mind was to be roused either to

* We do not speak of their literary merit. As a poem merely, what can compare with the *Iliad*?

terror or pity; and all other agencies were made subservient to this end. Now, the Jewish religion sought to tranquillize, not excite, the mind. It did not study to agitate the senses, but to purify the heart and elevate the affections. Its grand design was to raise the mind of a man to the study and contemplation of God. This it did by giving him proper notions of the Supreme Being. It made "the great God" holy, inflexibly just, unmoved by passions, incapable of anger or revenge, infinite in wisdom, pitiful as a father, and glorious in all his perfections. Neither Greek dramatist nor poet was fired by this high aim. Homer's chief study was to please,—not to purify, not to elevate, not to instruct: his whole machinery of the gods was the pure coinage of his own exhaustless invention, weaving the rude ideas of the age into a harmonious system for the entertainment of his readers. But what place had these worse than idle tales in the Holy City? Shall they be placed alongside those visions of the prophets, of Isaiah and Ezekiel, which were the product not of human fancy, but came by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost directly from God? What good could Greek fables do? What had they done for Greece? Is Bacchus, at whose yearly festivals in Attica these plays were performed, to be substituted, in any form, at any time, for the God of the whole earth?

But we will not follow this topic. A theatre, after the model of that in Athens, near the citadel, or that at the Piræus, or after the model of that which Pompey erected in Rome, (Pompey copied one in Mitylene,) arose in the city of Jerusalem. From early morning till the close of day, the multitude came to witness scenes

wholly new to a Jewish city and foreign to Jewish customs. Under the open sky, in broad daylight, the vast assemblage sat, in the unroofed theatre,—the sacrifices perhaps deserted, the morning and evening prayer at the Temple surely forgotten. Jews, Greeks, and Romans were here promiscuously mingled together; while poets, musicians, actors, and authors contended for victory. In Judea was seen for the first time the frantic Ajax, the fierce Achilles, the implacable Clytemnestra,—glorying in the murder of her husband as an act due to fate, she not censurable,—the sad Iphigenia, tender, generous, and true, the unhappy Œdipus of Colonus, and numerous other names familiar to the tragic Grecian muse. These things were seen in Jerusalem, the Holy City, where they should not have been seen. Or did Herod go further? Did he introduce comedy also into the Holy City,—Greek comedy, which professed no higher aim than merely to amuse? Was virtue ridiculed, as it had been in Athens in the person of Socrates, to produce the low laugh of the multitude? Were the gods travestied in the comedies that were performed in Jerusalem, and religion held up to ridicule and scorn, as in Athens, by a Cratinus, a Eupolis, an Aristophanes? By dress, language, and gesture, was modesty put to the blush? Who were the singers and poets in the contests of poetry and music? Were they Jews? Or did the splendid prizes proposed by Herod, and his well-known munificence, call the most distinguished competitors from a distance? and the strains that were sung, were they not rather those of a Pindar, or an Anacreon, or a Sappho, than of a David? Hushed was now the harp that erst the

hands of David swept, and mute the heaven-inspiring minstrelsy of the Temple.

Such a little, as pictured by us, the change produced by Herod in the substitution, to some extent at least, of the Greek theatre for the Jewish festivals and the Temple-worship. They could not both flourish well at once. As the love of the theatre would prevail, that of the service of the Temple and synagogue would languish and grow cold. Far had Herod degenerated from God when he made these innovations and laid this snare for his people. Many there were, as in the days of Jason and Menelaus, who hailed with joy the introduction of Greek customs and manners; for, like Herod, they were glad to find in such scenes a temporary relief from the upbraidings of a wounded conscience. He who has once known God and the joy of purity cannot readily erase the fond and holy remembrance. It is only by degrees his conscience becomes callous, insensible to goodness, being seared as with a hot iron.

This slight notice of one of the marked innovations of Herod upon the customs of his forefathers must suffice in this place. A brief reference to the introduction of Grecian games and Roman gladiatorial shows we reserve for a subsequent chapter.

CHAPTER III.

SIMEON.

THE bridge that spans the gulf of sin and the dark and troubled waters of time has, at the present epoch of our history, been reduced, since the first promise in Eden, from four thousand years to twenty. Never had God diverged from his majestic track; never had he allowed himself to be hurried by those who said, "Let him make speed, and hasten his work, that we may see it; and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh, and come, that we may know it."* This had often been the language of unbelief in the ages that were past;† yet did not the vision tarry, or the promise of the Almighty slumber.

As the moon sails on in its silent course, wading through the swiftly-moving clouds, and, even when hidden by them, lining them with its silver light, so God had moved on to the time of the end, hastening to the fulfilment of his promises, through all the revolutions of earth, emitting light from the expectation of the future

* Isa. v. 19. It was not left to a more recent day for the first time to ask, "Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." 2 Pet. iii. 4.

† See Jer. xvii. 15; Ezek. xii. 22-27.

on the darkest scenes of time. Ages had passed away in the long interval; the seat of empire had been transferred from the Tigris* and Euphrates to the Tiber; but God had never—no, not for a single instant—lost sight of his great promise to visit our world with his full salvation. The redemption of the earth stood out, like the moon at the full, as the great work of the Omnipotent Jehovah.

Among those who were called to play an important part in and to prepare the way for this great event was Simeon,—the same whom we introduced to our readers in the commencement of this work.† Thirty years or more have elapsed since then, and God has illuminated his mind more and more in regard to his advent into our world; for not wholly fabulous are the ideas in Grecian and Roman mythology of the gods clothing themselves in mortal flesh. These ideas, that appear so preposterous arrayed in the garb of ancient fiction, were derived originally from the prophetic books of the Jews. The Greeks had perverted them; but in the sublime system of Jewish theology, and in the more than mortal strains of the prophets, especially of Isaiah, the appearance of God in our world in a human form is an absolute reality, a fixed fact,—filling the mind with holy awe and devout rapture. Simeon was one whom God chose, as aforetime he did Noah and

* Nineveh, the most ancient city, was situated on the Tigris: at all events, it vied in antiquity with "Populous No,"* or Thebes, of Egypt, the city of a hundred gates in Homer.

† Book II. chap. iii. p. 44 of this work.

* Nahum iii. 8. Bruce the traveller, and Buckingham, (Travels in Mesopotamia,) regard "No" the same as Thebes.

Enoch, to whom to reveal the near approach of that expected hour to which all the prophets had borne their testimony. By the Holy Ghost it was made known to this man of God, perhaps, some twenty years or so before the time,* “that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ.”† What a revelation for God to make to man! What a vision to unfold to human eyes! How glorious to remove the curtain that shrouds the invisible, and for God, “the great God,” to make his appearance among men! To Isaiah had this been made known hundreds of years before. In announcing the birth of him who was “to prepare the way of the Lord and to make straight in the desert a highway for our God,”‡ words had been put in this prophet’s mouth, which, in the highest strain of majesty, declared this. These were the words:—the prophet Isaiah is speaking of HIM whom his forerunner is to precede, and whose way he is to prepare:—“O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain. O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength: lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God.”§ And, lest there should be any doubt resting on the mind as to this great and glorious Being who is to appear among men, he describes his infinite greatness, his matchless power. He who is to be made flesh, to be seen among men, who is “to feed his flock like a shepherd, who is to gather the lambs with his arm and carry them in his bosom, and gently to lead those that are with

* Virgil died about this time.

† Isa. xl. 3.

‡ Luke ii. 26.

§ Isa. xl. 9.

young,"* who is not to "cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street," who is not "to break the bruised reed nor to quench the smoking flax,"† is the High and Holy One, who "measures the waters in the hollow of his hand, who metes out heaven with the span, who comprehends the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighs the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance."‡ This is He whose way is to be prepared by the voice of one crying in the wilderness, and in respect to whom the prophet says "to the cities of Judea, BEHOLD YOUR GOD." This was the grand, the wonderful announcement. Isaiah's pen glows as he writes. He soars aloft, then rests. Again he ascends on his lofty flight, far beyond the highest range of Homeric inspiration. "Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt-offering. All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity."§ This is the Being, so infinitely great, so transcendently great and glorious, who is to descend, not from the starry heavens, but from the heaven of heavens, and to dwell for a stated period on earth among men. And now that the time has nearly arrived for the manifestation of God in the flesh, he makes known to Simeon, by a direct and most remarkable revelation, under what form

* Isa. xl. 11.

† Isa. xlii. 2, 3.

‡ Isa. xl. 12.

§ Isa. xl. 15, 16, 17. The invention of Homer, who expends so much power on Jupiter, has conceived nothing like this.

he is to appear, and assures him that he shall see him ere he die.

To Simeon it was made known that "He that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in; that bringeth the princes to nothing; he maketh the judges of the earth as vanity,"* was soon to appear in our world, assuming a human form, first as an infant, as a new-born babe from his mother's womb; that "a child was to be born, a son to be given."† As a babe he was to come into our world, to be "wrapped in swaddling-clothes"‡ and to require the care and sustenance of a mother. This he knew; this was made known to him by the Holy Ghost. God strengthened Simeon to bear this amazing revelation, and not to sink under it. But the revelation did not stop here. It embraced the history of this child, his death and passion. The "sword that was to pierce through the soul"§ of the mother of this holy child Simeon saw (as Isaiah had foreseen and described) beforehand. More than this. The rejection of this child, of their Messiah, by the Jews, with their "fall"|| in consequence of their rejection of him, he also saw. Neither was this all. In "the end of the days," in "the latter days," he saw their "rising again,"¶ their *resurrection*, and happy return to their own land. To his mind the resurrection in the "open valley" of dry

* Isa. xl. 22, 23. † Isa. xl. 9, 6. ‡ Luke ii. 7. § Luke ii. 35.

|| Ps. xi. 11. ¶ Luke ii. 34. "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel."

bones, as portrayed by Ezekiel, was a living reality. He saw Israel in "the latter days," under "David their king."* Simeon well knew that since the return from the Babylonish Captivity under Zerubbabel none of David's posterity had ruled over the kingdom of Israel. They had been in subjection first to the Persians,—then under Greek-Macedonian rule, after the death of Alexander the Great,—now to the Syrians,—now to the Ptolemies of Egypt: afterward the Asamonean princes had ruled over them, and then Herod, who was now king. Looking beyond the past and present history of his people, Simeon saw their dispersion—their almost hopeless condition in exile—in consequence of their unbelief and continued rejection of their Messiah, and then their glorious though late return. The words of Ezekiel the prophet were not empty words to him when he said, "Thus saith the Lord God: Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land: and I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions:† but I will save them out of all their dwelling-places, wherein they

* Ezek. xxxvii. 24.

† These words could not apply to the children of Israel at any time since the Captivity. Look at them under the government of Ezra and Nehemiah, under the rule of the house of Asamoneus, during the reign of Herod. The prophecy of Malachi, the words of John the Baptist and of Christ, show that they had not then put away "their transgressions." These words remain yet to be fulfilled.

have sinned, and will cleanse them: so shall they be my people, and I will be their God. And David my servant shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: and my servant David shall be their prince forever.”*

All this was present to the mind of Simeon. He entered also into the meaning of the words of the prophets when they spoke of the Gentile world. He saw that the child to be born was to be not only “the glory of Israel,”† but “a light to lighten the Gentiles;” that the salvation of God was intended for “all people.”‡ He saw clearly, as with open face, the veil having been removed from his mind, that “the Gentiles were to come to this light; and kings to the brightness of its rising.”§ How could he be otherwise than filled with joy and rapture at the transporting sight? A short time before this, Virgil, in some of his most perfect strains, had lamented the sad condition of the Roman world. He had said, “So many wars, so many aspects of crimes, are throughout the world; the plough has none of its due honors; the fields lie waste, their owners being drawn for service; and the crooked scythes are forged into rigid swords. Here Euphrates, there Germany, raises war; neighboring cities, having broken their mutual leagues, take arms; impious Mars rages throughout the world.”|| Over this sad field, from the mount of vision, Simeon cast his eye, and saw close at hand the commencement of the reign of the

* Ezek. xxxvii. 21-25. See also Jer. ii. 3-5.

† Luke ii. 32.

‡ Luke ii. 31.

§ Isa. lx. 3.

|| Georgics, book i.,—at the close,

where he eulogizes Augustus.

Prince of Peace. Extending his vision farther down the stream of Time, he saw Israel gathered to his ancient home, (the reign of Saturn in Latium begun indeed,) and, what Virgil sighed for, ONE close at hand (not Augustus, as the Mantuan bard sang) to “repair the ruins of the age.”* Here was a theme for contemplation,—especially as Simeon knew that it was not the dream of fiction, but an announcement from Heaven itself. To execute it, God himself is about to appear in mortal flesh and to dwell among men. Such was the nature of the revelation made by the Holy Ghost to Simeon.

* Virgil.

Book Tenth.

OCTAVIUS CÆSAR, SURNAMED AUGUSTUS BY THE ROMAN
SENATE.

PROEM.

OCTAVIUS, called also Caius Cæsar, after his great uncle Julius Cæsar, was born in Rome, a little after sunrise, in the ward of the Palatium, on the ninth of the Kalends of October, (the 23d of September,) Anno 63 B.C. A few months before his birth, as we are told by Julius Marathus, a freedman of Augustus, who wrote his life,* an oracle went forth that one was about to be born who would be king of Rome. And Plutarch tells us, in his Life of Cicero, that, while Cæsar and Pompey were yet alive, Cicero dreamed that he called a number of boys, sons of Senators, to the Capitol, Jupiter desiring to select a king from them. The people ran with great eagerness to the Temple, placing themselves in front of the porch or vestibule, while the boys sat silent on the steps. Suddenly the doors of the Temple opening, the boys went in one by one, passing round the god. They were all rejected till Octavius's turn came; then Jupiter stretched out his hand, and said,

* Suetonius, sect. 94.

"Romans, this is to be your prince."* Cicero perfectly recollected the figure and countenance of the boy. The next day, as he went down to the Campus Martius, he met the boys returning from their exercises. Among them he recognised young Octavius, whom he had never seen before, and whom he ever after treated with particular regard.†

The mother of Octavius—we have referred to it before—was Attia, daughter of Julia, sister of Julius Cæsar.‡ The year was memorable on account of the Catiline conspiracy. Tuscany and nearly all of Cisalpine Gaul was ripe for revolt; the youth of Rome, corrupted by Catiline, were prepared to co-operate with Catiline. Other causes—among the rest, the great inequality of wealth, and the impoverishment of many noble families—conspired to favor this wide-spread conspiracy. The old soldiers of Sylla, scattered throughout Italy, were prepared, with Manlius, one of the generals of Sylla, to join the movement. Catiline was candidate for the consulship,—an office which would greatly assist his designs. In this emergency Cicero stood forth, and by his energy and abilities—chiefly by his eloquence—saved his country.

While these things were transacting at Rome in the

* Suetonius tells this a little differently; but in substance it is the same.

† It is observable that in the case of Herod and Augustus, both of whom sustained so close a connection to "the most extraordinary event recorded in history either sacred or profane," their future advancement from a private station to be, one, King of the Jews, and the other, Emperor of Rome, was distinctly signified beforehand. In regard to Herod, see chap. i. of this work, "*The Prediction*."

‡ Julia, mother of Attia, married M. Atius Balbus, a man of consular rank.

year of the birth of Octavius, Pompey, returning from his expedition to the Red Sea and his conquest of Petra, (Herod, then a boy, the reader will recollect, was in this city at that time,) encamped before Jerusalem. After he had taken the city and Temple, he destroyed, as we have seen, the walls of the city and cast down its towers to the ground. He also exacted of the Jews heavy tribute, and made them dependent on Rome.*

This, then, was the year in which Octavius was born, marked by those two memorable events.

At the age of four he lost his father;† and when he was twelve years of age he pronounced a funeral oration in praise of his grandmother Julia.

He had just laid aside the *prætexta* and put on the *toga virilis*, the manly habit, when he followed his uncle Julius Cæsar into Spain. He showed so much activity on this occasion as greatly to please his uncle, who discovered his dawning talents. He was adopted by his uncle as his son, and made heir to his estate.‡

After this he studied for a short time at Apollonia, engaged in the study of Greek literature, of which he was fond,—having for his teacher Apollodorus of Pergamus, who, though far advanced in years, accompanied him from Rome for this purpose.§ At this

* See Book II. chap. i. p. 32 of this work.

† His mother Attia afterward married M. Philippus: she died in the first consulship of her son, when he was in his twentieth year.

‡ Julius Cæsar, who restored Judea to her independence, made Hyrcanus king, and granted permission to Antipater, father of Herod, to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, also prepared the way, by the adoption of his sister's daughter's son, for Cæsar Augustus to issue that decree by which Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, and that ancient prophecy fulfilled.

§ Suetonius, sect. 87.

early age a warm friendship (which ended only with their lives) had been formed between him and Agrippa,* who, as well as Apollodorus, attended him to Apollonia. While here, the two friends visited Theogenes the Astrologer. The astrologer assured Agrippa that his fortune would be almost incredibly great. It was with difficulty Augustus could be induced to tell his nativity, for he feared lest it might be inferior to that of Agrippa; but the instant the astrologer heard it he started up from his seat and paid him adoration.† While he was at Apollonia, he heard that his uncle Julius Cæsar was slain. He crossed the Adriatic, (Apollonia is opposite to Brundusium,) landed at Brundusium, and hastened to Rome. He immediately entered upon the administration of his uncle's estate, though his mother, Attia, feared the result, and his father-in-law, M. Philippus, earnestly dissuaded him from it. Antony had the money of Cæsar in his hands. Calphurnia also, the relict of Julius Cæsar, after his death, had intrusted Antony with her treasure, which amounted to four thousand talents.‡ At first Octavius visited Antony as the friend of his uncle, "and spoke to him concerning the money in his hands, and the legacy of seventy-five drachmas left to every Roman citizen."§ Antony, on account of the youth of Octavius, (he was at this time only eighteen years of age,) paid little regard to the request, and even threatened him with imprisonment if he continued to solicit the people. Upon this he joined

* M. Vipsanius Agrippa, the chief minister, friend, and confidant (with Mæcenas) of Augustus.

† Suet. sect. 94.

‡ Plutarch's Life of Antony.

§ Ibid.

Cicero and the enemies of Antony, and soon became powerful enough to drive him from Rome and Italy; while, through the influence of Cicero with the Senate, the rods, and the rest of the prætorial ensigns, were sent to young Cæsar. Afterward, as we know, he united with Antony and Lepidus, till, at the defeat of Antony at Actium and his death at Alexandria, eleven months afterward, he became sole ruler of the Roman empire.

The Roman Senate, desirous of showing him some signal token of distinction, called him Augustus,* as a name of the highest dignity. Under this august title, after the death of Antony, for the space of more than forty-four years, he ruled the empire with great moderation, wisdom, and clemency. He was greatly beloved by all classes of people. He received—what indeed he appears on many accounts truly to have deserved—the title of *Father of his country*. He labored hard to efface the remembrance of his cruelty at first, and in a great measure succeeded.

He died an easy death, at Nola, at three o'clock in the afternoon, in the month of September, “wanting only five-and-thirty days of seventy-six years.” He was buried in a mausoleum that he had erected not far from the city, between the Flaminian Way and the Tiber.†

* In Greek, Σεβαστος, venerable, adorable, divine. Augustus was deified, like Romulus, by the Romans. Munatius Plancus moved to give him this title. His body having been burned in the *Campus Martius*, (the Field of Mars,) a man of Prætorian rank affirmed, upon oath, that he saw his spirit ascend into heaven.*

† The remains of M. Agrippa, who died at the comparatively early age of fifty-one years, were deposited in a mausoleum which Augustus had prepared for himself.

Augustus was of small stature, though well proportioned, and "in person handsome and graceful. He had an aspect remarkably calm and serene, bright and piercing eyes. His eyebrows met; his ears were small; and he had an aquiline nose. His hair inclined to a yellow color, and his complexion betwixt brown and fair."

He was extremely affable, and admitted the common people, as well as those of the higher orders, to pay their respects to him. He was much displeased with the title of Lord, and to be so styled he regarded as a scandalous affront. Once one of the commonalty presenting to him a petition, he said, "You present your memoir with as much hesitation as if you were offering money to an elephant."*

He was, however, by no means free from vice. Whether he was addicted to the more scandalous vices, such as cannot be named, we know not. He was known to be guilty of excesses of another description, through not of so deep a dye, nor so offensively repugnant to nature, as the class above referred to. It is to the credit of Augustus that in an age so flagitious he at least affected external decency and sought to hide his vices from the public eye. Unlike Antony, and numerous others that might be named, he did not "glory in his shame."

Numerous conspiracies were formed against the life of Augustus, but were discovered and defeated. He did not treat with rigor those concerned in them, but with an unusual clemency.

* Suet. sect. 53.

As he was dying, he asked the friends who stood around his bedside "if they thought he had acted his part in life well." And then he immediately subjoined,—

"If all be right, with joy your voices raise
In loud applauses to the actor's praise."

After this, dismissing them, just as he expired, he said to Livia, his wife, "Livia, live mindful of our marriage, and farewell."

Augustus was thrice married. First to Antony's step-daughter, Claudia, daughter of Fulvia by Publius Claudius; next to Scribonia, whom he divorced; and lastly to Livia Drusilla, wife of Tiberius Nero, during the lifetime of her husband. Little worthy as she was of it, Livia retained his affections through all the rest of his life. It was her eldest son Tiberius (she had two sons by Tiberius Nero, Tiberius and Drusus: she had no issue by Augustus) who succeeded to the empire upon the death of his step-father Augustus, and in the twenty-second year of whose reign occurred the crucifixion of Christ.*

In regard to Rome, we are told that Augustus received it as a city of brick, but left it one of marble. The inundations of the Tiber, likewise, to which the city had been subject, he guarded against, as also

* See Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, vol. ii. chap. 16. Gibbon quotes the passage from the *Annals of Tacitus* that refers to this event. His criticism on this celebrated passage deserves the most serious attention of the reader. Gibbon fully settles the question of its authenticity and has rendered the most essential service to Christianity. Independently of the gospel testimony, we have the authority of Tacitus that Christ suffered death in the reign of Tiberius, by the sentence of the procurator Pontius Pilate.

against fires, "as far as could be guarded by human foresight."

The event, however, which of all others distinguishes the reign of Cæsar Augustus, is the birth of Christ,—an event to which every other event is as nothing, and upon which hangs that Cumæan age of which Virgil sung in this reign, and which is yet to come,—when even Virgil's glowing picture will be found to be a faint copy of the glorious reality.*

CHAPTER I.

THE CONSPIRACY OF THE TEN.

WHILE the many crowded to the theatre to see a spectacle so new to Jewish eyes in the Holy City,—to witness the acting, if not of a Theodorus or a Polus,† of others, perhaps, of nearly if not quite equal eminence,—others there were, though few in number, who in secret brooded over the dire evil that Herod had inflicted on

* See Virgil's Fourth Eclogue.

† Theodorus and Polus were distinguished Greek actors, who lived about 350 B.C. "The expression of the former," it is said, "was so truly natural that he might have been taken for the very person he represented; the latter had attained to the perfection of his art. Never were greater powers joined to so much intelligence and sentiment." This is the opinion of Aristotle, who saw them both. *Anacharsis' Travels in Greece*, vol. vi. p. 81.

their laws and on the constitution of their country. Unhappily, they took a misguided view of the great evil, and, instead of directing their prayers to God and trusting in his arm for salvation, they resorted to the dagger, to treason and conspiracy. They took the punishment of evil-doing on themselves, forgetting that it belongeth to God to execute righteousness and judgment. Nowhere in his word does God permit or sanction evil for the sake of evil. When the disciples of Christ would have called down judgment upon his enemies, he told them they knew not what spirit they were of. When Moses went down into Egypt to free his countrymen from their hard bondage and to deliver them from their taskmasters, he went openly, unarmed, save with a rod in his hand, and in the light of day. He rested his cause in His hands who has commanded the oppressor to let the oppressed go free. God had decreed the freedom of his people; and in his Name he well knew it would be effected. Say to Pharaoh, said God, "I AM" (that is, Jehovah) hath sent me.* This was enough. He whose existence is in himself,—what limit can there be to his power?

The Jews had lessons enough on this point. If they felt in a just manner the wrongs that Herod inflicted, the injury that was done to their law, they should have resorted to prayer, to entreaty, to personal dissuasions.

* Compare Exod. iii. 14 with chap. vi. 3. The idea here is that of underived existence. God had previously made himself known to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob "by the name of God Almighty;" but when he undertook the deliverance of his people from Egyptian servitude, he proclaimed himself to Moses by the name "I AM THAT I AM," that is, Jehovah,—bringing out the grandest of all ideas, that of the sole, underived, self-existent God.

As Elijah did of old, they should, at the peril of their lives, have remonstrated face to face with the king; but to resort to secret conspiracy, to arm themselves with daggers and stealthily to murder the king, was not merely a political offence deserving of death, but it was a crime against God. Yet this was the course a few zealous partisans of the law, as they styled themselves, saw fit to take. Of their sincerity, so far as we can see, there can hardly be a doubt; but theirs was a mistaken zeal, to speak in the mildest manner.

While a few thus brooded over the wrongs of their country in secret, and hatched conspiracy and death,—stepping into the place of God as the executioners of his vengeance, without any authority from him to that effect,—the great body of the Jews were deeply offended with Herod from another cause.

The trophies of gold and silver which Herod had placed within his theatre in honor of Cæsar Augustus, and with which also it was enriched and embellished, (for Herod was desirous that his theatre should be surpassed by none,) excited among the multitude of Jews the greatest concern,—indignation mingled with alarm, because they regarded them as images, so strictly forbidden by their law, and which since the Captivity had been held by them in the most perfect abhorrence. Herod, to relieve their minds,—for his own assertions that images of men were not concealed within the armor availed nothing,—went with the leading remonstrants into the theatre. As they stood upon the stage, the king asked them “what they took those trophies to be;” and when they replied, “the images of men,” he ordered the shining armor to be removed, and when

they saw that within the armor was not the statue of a man, carved by the sculptor, but pieces of wood, on which the armor was hung, they laughed outright, and went away entirely satisfied.

Not so with the ten. One of the number was a blind man, who, though he could take no active part in the plot, upheld the rest by his spirit. They designed to murder Herod as he entered the theatre, having their daggers concealed under their cloaks. They knew they should die,—that they would not be able to escape; but this did not deter them. A little before the time fixed upon to consummate their purpose, the conspiracy was detected by one of those spies whom Herod employed to discover who were friendly and who were not friendly to his government. He had a narrow escape; for he was about to go into the theatre when told of his danger. Returning to the palace, having been furnished with the names and the description of the persons of the ten, he sent his guard to arrest and bring them to the palace. They were found with their arms as described: they did not deny the act, but boldly avowed and justified it. They were all put to death, suffering “patiently all the torments inflicted on them.”* The spy who informed Herod of the conspiracy was afterward caught by certain people who sympathized with the ten, and put to death in the street in open day, and then torn to pieces, limb from limb, and given to the dogs. When the perpetrators of this crime were detected, horrible to relate, not only were they tortured to death, “but their entire families were destroyed.”†

* Joseph. Antiq. book xv. chap. 8.

† Ibid.

But the spirit of this extreme party was by no means put down by these cruelties. They viewed Herod as the unscrupulous violator of the Jewish laws; and, fancying they did God a service, they cherished toward him the deepest hatred.

CHAPTER II.

HEROD REBUILDS SAMARIA.

AFTER the battle of Actium, the temple of Janus Quirinus was shut. There was universal peace,—peace by sea and land. This was the third time since the building of Rome* that this temple had been closed. First in the time of its builder, Numa Pompilius: during his long and peaceful reign it was not once opened. This wise and pious king studied only how he might promote peace and a reverence for religion. He regarded private and public faith as the foundation of his country's welfare. It was next closed at the end of the First Punic War, in the consulate of Titus Manlius;† and now, after the death of Antony, and the battle of Actium, it is closed for the third time. Herod's king-

* Rome at first was not a mile in circuit: it had not over a thousand houses, and commanded an extent of country of about eight miles around it. From this small beginning it grew to be the capital of the whole earth. It was after the expulsion of Pyrrhus from Italy by the Romans that the republic first began to rise into notice. This was in the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus of Egypt, who sent an embassy to them.

† Livy, book i.

dom shared in the general peace; and, with that strong desire which he had to perpetuate his name and aggrandize his kingdom, he began to restore the waste places of the land,—everywhere to erect palaces, fortresses, and cities.

In early life, as we have seen, Herod had been Governor of Samaria. He appears ever to have entertained a strong partiality for the people of Samaria, and they for him. To restore their ancient capital was one of his first enterprises.

Since the reign of John Hyrcanus, the city of Samaria had been in ruins: he had destroyed the city, razing it to its foundations. The temple also on Gerizim was destroyed by him, two hundred years from the time of its erection.* The temple of Gerizim was the rival of that in Jerusalem; and the city of Samaria had long been the resort of apostate Jews. In the time of Nehemiah, Manasseh, son of Joiada the high-priest, had married the daughter of Sanballat the Horonite, and governor, under Persian rule, of Samaria. Nehemiah required of Manasseh that he should repudiate his wife, as she was not of his nation; but he refused, and fled to Samaria. His father-in-law, Sanballat, having obtained permission of the Persian king, Darius Nochus, to build a temple, his son became the high-priest; and hence on Gerizim and in Jerusalem was the same service, and the same offerings were daily presented to the Most High God. There was the same law and the same ritual, and, in fact, the same people. The city was thoroughly Jewish; for the Jews that fled

* Joseph. Antiq. book .xiii. chap. 9, sect. 1.

there at first, and their descendants, had obtained such a preponderance that scarce a vestige was left of that foreign population placed there by Esarhaddon, King of Assyria, when the ten tribes were carried into captivity. In the time, however, of Alexander the Great, the Samaritans having incurred his displeasure, he drove them from their city and put Macedonians in their place. The dispossessed Samaritans settled in Shechem, at the foot of Gerizim, which has continued to this day the head of their sect.*

This once celebrated city, the capital of ancient Israel, Herod undertook to rebuild.

Samaria, or rather the hill on which the city was built, stands by itself, rising out of the centre of a rich plain. The top of the steep and high hill,† enlarged probably by Herod, was more than two miles in circuit. Here rose the new city, with its strong wall and towers, by which it was encompassed. On the apex of the hill, in the centre of the city, was a sacred square, containing a temple built in honor of, and dedicated to, (for a Jew this was an impious act, even if regarded in no other than an honorary light,) Cæsar Augustus. Fountains on the top of the hill supplied the city, as of old, with water. The buildings were fine.

* It was the Macedonian colony John Hyrcanus expelled when he took the city of Samaria and destroyed it. It is probable Hyrcanus destroyed the city from a principle of religious zeal. He may have regarded it as a spot accursed not only by the Macedonian colony but also by the apostate Jews. The rigid Pharisees, whose influence was very great in his reign, politically as well as religiously, may have urged him, and probably did urge him, to the commission of the act. If so, the destruction of the city, as of the temple, may be traced to the promptings of intolerant zeal.

† It is five hundred feet in height.

There was a palace for the king ; and Herod, diverging farther and farther from the spirit and letter of the Jewish law, built here also a theatre, desirous to extend his innovations and to bring over the people generally to his own views. As the hill of Samaria was quite steep, it was begirt with at least three terraces, (they can be traced to this day,) each terrace adorned around its entire circuit with porticos supported by splendid rows of pillars.* Like the cloisters or porticos around the great outer court of the Temple at Jerusalem, these served as covered walks for the people, and must have formed a lovely promenade, such as no other city in the land—not even Jerusalem itself—furnished. When the city was completed, Herod drew inhabitants from every quarter,—not only Jews, but foreigners,—and granted for their use certain unappropriated lands contiguous to the city, skirting the base of the hill, and extending perhaps several miles in circuit. The city itself he called *Sebaste*,—from *Sebastos*, the Greek word for Augustus,—in honor of the Roman emperor.

The view from the city on the top of this high hill was most varied and extensive, affording the finest prospect in all the land. To the south was Gerizim, about six miles from Samaria ; to the north was the wide and open plain of Esdraelon, with the mountains of Tabor and Gilboa rising out of its fertile bosom. There was Gilboa : the eye could rest on that, while the lament of David upon the death of Saul and

* Perhaps somewhat similar to the terraces in front of the Capitol at Washington.

Jonathan would hardly fail to be recalled to the mind. Such an elogy!—so soft, so sweet, so touching,—gushing from the fountain of the heart as from a living spring. Did ever Greek or Roman poet write a strain so soft, so tender? Tibullus and Propertius, who lived about this time, and who adorned by their elogies the age of Augustus, did they ever write a strain so sweet, so imbued with pathos? Turning from Gilboa, on the northeast, to the west, the eye rested on the waters of the Mediterranean Sea, seen through a vale formed by an opening in the surrounding mountains,—distinctly visible from the temple that crowned the hill, or from one of the colonnades by which it was begirt.

It would seem as if the foreign population which Herod placed in the city must soon have mixed with the Jewish; for in the time of Christ's ministry (some forty years after Samaria was rebuilt by Herod) the inhabitants of this region were known as Samaritans. As such, they worshipped the one living and true God, believed in the Messiah, and, rejecting the traditions of the elders, adhered to the simple text, the written word. Cut off from companionship with the Jews *proper*, from those of Judah and Benjamin on one side and those of Galilee on the other, attending not the yearly festivals in Jerusalem, having no longer a temple of their own on Gerizim, still, they maintained the Jewish faith in great purity, and gave to Christ, when he came, a hearty welcome. Amid their brooks and vine-clad hills and vales, they read the law and the prophets, rejoiced in hope of the resurrection of the dead, and looked for redemption in Israel.

CHAPTER III.

HEROD BUILDS CÆSAREA.*

THE Mediterranean Sea! At the narrow strait of the Pillars of Hercules,† this sea, detaching itself from the broad Atlantic, sweeps along, washing Afric's shores on one side, those of Gaul, Iberia, Italy, and Greece on the other. On it sweeps, till it comes with full force against the western terminus of Palestine. What a sea! What empires and cities have stood on its shores! What a Babel of tongues has been heard on its multi-form coasts! Here the Phœnician tongue, there the Coptic, the Hebrew, the various dialects of Greece, the majestic Latin tongue, and we know not how many others. Its islands, how numerous and how celebrated! Into how many smaller seas has it been divided,—the great sea the mother of a numerous offspring! What battles have been fought on these waters! What navies have ridden in triumph over them!—those of ancient Carthage, for instance. Here once sailed Æneas, seeking the Lavinian shore,—pious Æneas, carrying his household gods with him, “for many years, driven by fate, roaming round every sea.”‡ Out on this sea looked

* Its full name was Cæsarea Sebaste, that is, Cæsar Augustus. Other kings besides Herod, in alliance with Augustus, according to Suetonius, built cities and called them by the name of Cæsarea.

† Straits of Gibraltar.

‡ Æneid, book i.

proud Carthage,—Carthage, whose doom the elder Cato pronounced. Here is Sicily, where the Romans, passing out of Italy and crossing the narrow straits that separate that island from the continent, first tried their strength on a foreign soil. Once fixed there, Carthage invited their longing eye; the shores of Africa and the proud towers of Carthage being seen from this island. At a much later date rose the city of Alexandria, and the tower of Pharos, shedding its light far and wide upon the sea, forewarning the mariner of the long line of low coast that received, as if to its loving embrace, the heaving wave. Here is Rhodes; here Protogenes painted; here is Cos, where Apelles was born; here also, on this same little island of Cos, lived, and died at a great age, the world-renowned Hippocrates. Here is the promontory of Sunium, with its temple, on this extreme end of Attica; while Plato and a little knot of his disciples stand near the edge of the promontory, listening to the sound of the waves as they dash against the rough, rocky shore, and speaking of God, the world, and the immortality of the soul. Here is Asiatic Greece, on the coast of the Ægean, with its far-famed cities, Miletus, Ephesus, Halicarnassus, and numerous others, less known to fame, forming the boundary in this direction of the Persian empire. But to tell the wonders of this sea, one would never have done. We may not follow it in its winding course to Ilium, where Hector and Achilles fought, or speak of the wrath of the latter, which proved

—————"to Greece the direful spring
Of woes unnumber'd."*

* Iliad.

Wend we our way to a holier shore. Classic Greece—with its temples, its schools, its groves, rites, philosophy, language, warriors, poets, historians, sculptors, painters, scholars—cannot compare with this. Here the sea ends: its last waves either gently lave, or wildly dash upon, Philistia's shore, the time-honored patrimony of God's chosen people. From the low lands of Mesopotamia came Abram to the high hills of the land of his sojourn, and from one of Samaria's mountains for the first time these waters greeted his sight. Since then, prophets have looked on them, and a Jonah has fathomed them, descending down to the "bottom of the mountains, and wrapping the sea-weed about his head."* Illustrious type of the great Jewish doctrine, the resurrection of the dead, from under the yielding wave and from the soft bosom of the earth! From their calm and glassy surface ascended the cloud, so small when first seen, which from Carmel's height the prophet invoked, and which, spreading through the heavens, soon enveloped the whole land of Israel and poured its tribute of waters upon the dry and thirsty earth.

These waters are to see another city on their shores. Cæsarea is to be its name. Midway between Joppa on the south and Dora on the north, at a point formerly called Stratos Tower, Herod determined to build his new city. To increase its importance, to add to its wealth, he built a harbor directly in front of it, of the size of that of the Piræus at Athens. The Jews had no suitable harbor on the Mediterranean; the principal seaport, Joppa, was exposed, shelterless, to winds and

* Jonah ii. 5.

waves. The vessels had to anchor off the shore, exposed ever to the rough south and westerly gales. To guard against this, to provide a secure haven for ships of all sizes, Herod built a circular mole, somewhat after this fashion. Measuring from the shore the necessary distance to very deep water, he dropped stones of an immense size, till he formed a breakwater of the width of one hundred feet,—a work of vast labor. This kept off the sea. He then built a grand quay or wharf adjoining this, also a hundred feet in width. On this he built a wall, running along the entire mole, to protect it completely from the violence of the waves. This wharf wide, solid, and protected from the highest wave and the most boisterous wind, was occupied by large storehouses or granaries. They were erected in a style of elegant workmanship, notwithstanding the use to which they were appropriated: so that they were called “towers.” One of them was called Drusium, after Drusus, the brother of Tiberius and step-son of Augustus.* At this wharf the vessels were moored, and here they unladed and received their cargos. As for the high wall that was built around the entire mole, it was of such width as to form a noble promenade, where one could inhale the fresh breeze and look out upon the broad expanse of the sea. The entrance into this harbor was from the north.† At the mouth, on each side, were

* This Drusus died young, in Germany. His brother (afterward Tiberius Nero Cæsar, who succeeded Augustus) “brought his body to Rome, travelling all the way on foot before it.”*

† “The north wind was there the most gentle of all winds.” Joseph. Jewish War, book i. chap. 22, sect. 7.

* Suet. Life of Tiberius Cæsar, sect. 7.

strong bulwarks; that on the left was in the form of a round turret; on the right were simply two very large square stones joined together. These were intended to protect the entrance against the waves. On the top of the turret and of the two huge square stones were placed three colossi, three statues of gigantic size, similar to those that Herod had seen in Rhodes. These, of course, were to serve as ornaments at the entrance of the harbor, and were not, like the great Colossus at Rhodes, dedicated to any god. The harbor was divided into two compartments, one for vessels of the largest size, the other for smaller vessels. Once within the deep, capacious haven, they were securely sheltered. The west wind might blow loudly, and the angry waves dash against the outer bulwark and send their spray upon the high-raised wall, but here all was calm; and vessels from every sea, from the Cimmerian Bosphorus, and the Euxine on the north, and from Tartessus, on the coast of Iberia,* in the Atlantic, could ride secure as if upon a peaceful lake.

As to the city, it also, like the mole, took the form, as we infer, of a half-moon. As the mole swept in the shape of a half-circle through the sea, the city, directly facing it, took the same form. They were as two mirrors reflecting each other,—with probably this difference, that the city embraced the largest circumference. Also, as in a theatre the space or passages between the seats converge toward the stage, so the narrow streets of Cæsarea were made to converge toward the harbor. If we suppose that the market-place, or forum, which

* Spain.

Herod built, was here, between the sea and the city, we would have all the streets of Cæsarea pouring their inhabitants, on any public occasion, to a common centre, the place of public concourse.

The buildings of the city commenced at each point of the harbor, where the mole adjoined the land, and swept around in a continuous circle, save as they were intersected by streets at equal distances from each other, having the imposing appearance of the interior of a theatre. As they were all built of white stone, not only the more costly buildings, but those of the citizens generally, and as they rose one above another by a gentle elevation, all built according to a specific plan, (who can say but that Herod was aided by Vitruvius, who, under the patronage of Augustus and Agrippa, adorned Rome?) the city must have presented a magnificent appearance. Cæsarea, besides its “sumptuous palaces and large edifices for the people,”* had its theatre and amphitheatre: the latter was built south of the mole, the shore making a curve in that direction. Not far from the amphitheatre, a little in the rear, on an elevation, Herod erected a temple to Augustus, built of the finest white marble. This, like the monument of the Maccabees, on the same shore, was seen at sea at quite a distance. There were two colossi in this temple,—one of Augustus, the other of Rome.

The design of Herod was to make Cæsarea as much a Greek city as possible. He did not exclude the synagogue, but he gave every encouragement to the

* Joseph. Antiq. book xv. chap. 9, sect. 6.

Greeks. He was every day growing more and more jealous of his own countrymen, and here, as in Samaria, sought to have a party of his own. His innovating spirit, his departure from Jewish customs, his attempt to blend Jew and Greek, gave increasing concern to a large majority of the Jews. He was conscious of this, and wished to counteract to some extent the opposition of his own subjects by the favor he bestowed on the Greeks. Building an entirely new city, settling it himself, he was enabled to carry out his plan; and the city, in fact as well as in name, was more a Greek than a Jewish city. So it always remained.

Cæsarea was begun in the sixteenth year* of Herod's reign, and was completed in twelve years from that time, that is, in the twenty-eighth of his reign, ten years before the birth of Christ.

*The year before Herod began to build Cæsarea, died Marcellus, at the age of eighteen, the son of Octavia by her first husband, and the adopted son and heir of Augustus. He was a youth of great promise. Of him Virgil thus wrote:—

“Him the Fates shall just show on earth, nor suffer long to exist. Ye gods, Rome's sons had seemed too powerful in your eyes, had these your gifts been permanent. What groans of heroes shall that field near the imperial city of Mars send forth! What funeral pomp shall you, O Tiberinus, see, when you glide by his recent tomb! Give me lilies in handfuls; let me strew the blooming flowers; these offerings at least let me [it is Anchises who speaks prophetically to Æneas] heap upon my descendant's shade, and discharge this unavailing duty.”—*Æneid*, book vi.

† As to the name Cæsarea, Suetonius thus writes:—“The kings his friends and allies, each of them in their respective kingdoms, built cities under the name of Cæsarea.”—*Life of Cæsar Augustus*, sect. 60.

CHAPTER IV.

DANIEL'S SEVENTY WEEKS.

IN the seventh year of the reign of Artaxerxes Longimanus, King of Persia, the decree was issued by which Ezra undertook the reformation of the Jewish state.* After laboring in that department thirteen years, he was succeeded by Nehemiah, with whom he co-operated while he lived. The two together labored forty-nine years, making seven weeks of years, or the first division of Daniel's prophecy.

The task of Nehemiah differed in some respects from that of Ezra. To Nehemiah belonged the reconstruction of the walls of Jerusalem. This fixes the exact date of the prophecy of Daniel "unto the Messiah the Prince." From the time that the decree went forth "to restore and build Jerusalem," including its social and ecclesiastical organization by Ezra, and the rearing of the wall by Nehemiah, (for it would seem as if both were included,) from that time seventy weeks were to elapse, when "Messiah should be cut off, but not for himself."†

When Nehemiah came to the city, though the Temple had long been built, the wall and gates of Jerusalem

* It was over seventy years from the time that Cyrus issued his decree before Ezra received his commission from Artaxerxes.

† Dan. ix. 26.

were in ruins. The city also, owing, probably, to this circumstance, was thinly inhabited. Nehemiah said to Artaxerxes, speaking of its desolate condition, "The city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire." This was its condition. When he undertook to rebuild the wall, great was the opposition he met with; but he persevered; and at last it was finished, though, in the language of the prophecy, "in troublous times."

What we have traced above in a brief synopsis, we shall enlarge upon (owing to its importance) a little more fully in what follows.

It appears that Ezra's commission really embraced the rebuilding of the wall and the restoration of the city, (which could not properly be said to be restored while for want of wall and gates it was exposed defenceless to its enemies,) as well as Nehemiah's. He says so himself.* But the times were bad; the enemies of the Jews were fully resolved that the wall of their city should not be rebuilt; and Ezra, under the circumstances, seems to have regarded it as the best course for him to take to promote the spiritual reformation of the people. Year after year passed away, and the desolation of the city still continued. Nehemiah heard of this, and he came to the help of Ezra. How did he act? Communicating his intention to no one, he stealthily by night examined the condition of the walls. The walls were not wholly destroyed; but there were numerous breaches in every part of them, so that they afforded no protection to the city. As to the gates,

* Ezra ix. 9.

they had all been burned with fire. He next got the consent of the people to the work, and, for greater expedition, divided it into sections. All the sections were commenced at once; and the people labored (for Nehemiah tells us "the people had a mind to work"*) from early dawn till the stars appeared. As soon as it was known, their enemies resolved to stop them by force; but Nehemiah, learning their intention, armed the whole population of Jerusalem and prepared for defence. This disconcerted their opponents; for they meant to have taken them by surprise.† After this, part watched, while the rest worked; but even these had their weapons close at hand. At the same time, one stood with a trumpet ready to give the alarm. In this way, the rebuilding of the wall, and the restoration of Jerusalem, proceeded till it was done; and it was only in this way it was accomplished. In fifty-two days the damaged, partly-destroyed walls were repaired and the gates set up.‡

This in brief is the history of the erection of the walls of the city; and this fixes with the utmost precision the exact date of the time whence to compute the seventy weeks of Daniel. From the date of Ezra's commission, in the seventh year of the reign of Artaxerxes, (and Nehemiah's is only to be regarded as a renewal or extension of Ezra's,) unto Messiah the Prince, (that is, the Anointed Prince,) was to be seventy weeks, or four hundred and ninety years. And the decree to Ezra first, and thirteen years afterward that to Nehemiah, must be distinguished from the two others that were before issued—one by Cyrus and one by

* Neh. vi. 4.

† Ibid. iv. 15.

‡ Ibid. vi. 15.

Darius Hystaspes—by this prominent feature, the full restoration of the city by rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem now first since it was thrown down by Nebuchadnezzar. Nothing can be more explicit, nothing more plain or simple, than the words of the prophecy of Daniel:—“*Know, therefore, and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto Messiah the Prince [the Anointed Prince] shall be seven weeks and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.*”*

There is no difficulty in tracing Daniel's seventy weeks after this.

The next portion of the prophecy is “threescore and two weeks,” or sixty-two weeks of years, that is, four hundred and thirty-four years, which brings us down to the very year in which John the Baptist commenced his

* The evidence is incontrovertible that “the wall” was not built until now, though nearly eighty years had intervened between the decree of Cyrus and that of Artaxerxes. The words of Nehemiah are conclusive upon this point. After he had secretly by night examined the condition of the walls, he called the people together (the Jewish commonwealth was a true democracy) and said, “Ye see the distress we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire; come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach.”—Neh. ii. 17.

It is equally incontrovertible that “the street was built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.” We have only faintly represented the opposition Nehemiah met with. Had not Nehemiah been on his guard, he would have been murdered. A plan was formed for this purpose. Every method of intimidation and stratagem was used by Sanballat, Governor of Samaria, who had a considerable force at his command, by Tobiah the Ammonite, and others, to put a stop to the work. This is the reason it had been hindered so long. Most assuredly this point fixes the time from which we are to begin to date Daniel's prophecy of seventy weeks.

public ministry, which was the commencement, or inauguration, of that of Christ.*

The next and last division of the prophecy was this:—“He shall confirm the covenant with many for one week,”† this making the seventy weeks. First, seven weeks; second, sixty-two weeks; third, one week: seventy weeks in all.

The last week (*i.e.* the third division of the prophecy) covers the whole period of the ministry of Christ and his forerunner John. At its close, Christ Jesus the Lord, by his death, “finished the transgression, made an end of sins, made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in everlasting righteousness.” Then it was “the vision and the prophecy were sealed up;” then it was “the Most Holy was anointed.”‡

We propose to make one or two remarks upon the foregoing.

The first division of this prophecy, that is, the *seven weeks*, or forty-nine years, is pregnant with great names and striking events in Grecian annals. While Ezra and Nehemiah labored to restore Jerusalem, Greece was at the acme of its glory. A very short time before Ezra received his commission, Themistocles came to the Persian court for refuge. Banished by ostracism from Athens, driven from Argos by the hate of the Spartans, his only alternative was to cast himself upon the mercy of the Persian monarch. Contemporary with Themistocles was Aristides, who is known by the most godlike of all appellations, that of “The Just.” Alcibiades lived

* “For all the law and the prophets prophesied until John.” Matt. ii. 13.

† Dan. ix. 27.

‡ Ibid. ix. 24.

within this time, to-day the scholar of Socrates, to-morrow running into every extravagant folly. Changeable as a chameleon, the wildest freaks were succeeded by the thoughtfulness of the sage. But perhaps never was goodness so evanescent; and if Socrates' hopes were sometimes raised that Alcibiades would yet prove a worthy votary of philosophy and redeem himself from his seemingly incurable faults, oftener were they dashed to the ground. Pericles also flourished during the same period; and Phidias the sculptor also, who appears to have been, in the ornamentation of Athens, to Pericles, what Vitruvius was to Augustus and Rome. Æschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, then wrote those immortal works which Herod the Great rendered familiar to a Jewish audience. It was toward the close of Nehemiah's administration that the unhappy Peloponnesian War broke out,* which was to Greece what the division of Israel and Judah was to the kingdom of David. Thucydides and Xenophon, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, also adorned this period. The plague which broke out in Athens in the second year of the Peloponnesian War, and of which Pericles was one of the first victims, (which, originating in Ethiopia, had previously ravaged Syria, Phenicia, Judea, and which was extended over nearly the whole earth,) brought, from his native isle of Cos, Hippocrates to Athens, where he displayed a noble humanity, fearlessly exposing his life to the contagion, though as he himself allowed not with much success.

We may observe, also, that during the earlier part of

* This war lasted in all twenty-seven years. Thucydides wrote the history of the first twenty-one years, Xenophon the remainder.

the government of Ezra occurred the scene of the Haman tragedy,—Ahasuerus, who exalted Esther, a Jewish maiden, to be queen of the Persian empire, being (as is thought) one and the same person with Artaxerxes.

We may observe, further, that during his long term of service Nehemiah twice returned to the Persian court,—first for a short time. Upon his second visit he remained several years. On his final return to Judea, he found the Jews had greatly retrograded. The priests especially were guilty. His own labors and those of Ezra were already nearly lost,—the reflux wave of sin rising and overflowing temple and sanctuary, altar and offering. Malachi, who probably lived about this time, draws a picture similar to that of Nehemiah, both of them tracing the degeneracy that so swiftly followed to the priesthood.

“But first among the priests dissension springs,—
Men who attend the altar, and should most
Endeavor peace: their strife pollution brings
Upon the temple itself.”*

The account of Nehemiah's last reformation closes the historical portion of the Bible. The last words of the sacred annals are those of Nehemiah, with which his book is closed. They are these:—“Remember me, O my God, for good.”† Malachi closed, probably, his prophecy about the same time, if not before.

A silence after this of some four hundred years intervened, when to Zacharias was sent the angel Gabriel to announce the birth of John,—“the voice of one crying in the wilderness,” the forerunner of the Messiah. Here

* Paradise Lost, book xii.

† Neh. xiii. 31.

we close the tenth book of this work. The time is now near at hand, the great time of the earth's redemption. Soon the curtain will arise, and those scenes will be presented to the reader which will usher in (not consummate) that glorious day when "the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountain, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it."*

* Isa. ii. 2.

Book Eleventh.

THE AUGUSTAN AGE.

PROEM.

'Twas morning when Æneas, with his tempest-tossed ships, first descried the entrance into the Tiber, by the color of its waters and by the whirl and swiftness with which they poured into the sea,—the entrance partially hidden by a “spacious grove” and the thick shade of embowering trees. The bard thus describes the Trojan fleet as it glides out of the waters of the “azure sea” into the shady river, “grassy banks” adorning both sides of the since so celebrated stream:—

“And now the sea began to redden with the beams of the sun, and from the lofty sky the saffron-colored morn shone in her rosy car, when on a sudden the winds grew still, every breath of air died away, and the oars struggle on the smooth surface of the lazy main. And here, from the deep, Æneas espies a spacious grove. Through this Tiberinus, god of the pleasant river Tiber, with rapid whirls and vast quantities of yellow sand discolored, bursts forward into the sea. All around, and overhead, various birds, accustomed to the banks

and channel of the river, charmed the skies with their songs and fluttered up and down the grove. Hither Æneas commands his mates to bend their course, and turn their prows to land; and with joy he enters the shady river.”*

’Tis pleasing to follow the poet in his story, to read of the morning banquet under the trees, and the reception of Æneas and his “co-mates and partners in exile” by the aged king Latinus.† But perhaps this is only the poet’s golden fiction, who would fain trace the foundation of so powerful a state as that of Rome to a divine source. Not wholly fabulous, however, was the story of the poet. Long before his time the conquests of this mighty nation had been foretold by the unerring prescience of the great God of heaven and of earth. In the visions of the night there rose up before the closed yet seeing eye of Nebuchadnezzar a vast image,—an image so vast that it was terrible to behold. Its head was of fine gold; its breast and arms of silver; its belly and thighs of brass; its legs of iron; its feet partly of iron, partly of clay.‡ An exceeding brightness encompassed the image, a resplendency of glory that showed it was of no common mould, that its origin was celestial. This image traced the course of earth’s empire for a long period of time,—the eye of the Jewish seer reading aright from its wondrous page the overthrow of the Chaldean monarchy, the

* Æneid, b. vii.

† The genealogy of Latinus, even if fabulous, it is pleasing to trace. The father of Latinus was Faunus; of Faunus, Picus; Picus was the son of Saturn, King of Latium, whose reign was so benignant as to be styled *the golden age*.

‡ Dan. ii. 31, 32.

rise and succession of the Medo-Persian empire, next the rapid conquests of Alexander the Great, prefigured by the image of the "goat with the great horn" or antler "between the eyes," (that is, Alexander the Great, the first king, himself,) which, moving from the west to the east with amazing celerity, is described as not "touching the ground;"* and, finally, the universal dominion of Rome. Not, then, wholly fabulous was the poet's description of the divine origin of the Roman state; for those eyes which run to and fro through the whole earth watched over its infancy, and the Supreme gave it its great power.† God is never to be ruled out of his earth; his power, his providence, extend to all his creatures,—even the smallest and seemingly the most insignificant; and surely neither are dormant when so great a power as that of ancient Rome rises up from the obscurity of the banks of the Tiber to be the mistress of the world.

When, in addition to this, we recollect that it was in the time of this fourth empire—this empire that was to be stronger and more powerful than any that had preceded it, an empire that was to "break in pieces and subdue all things"—Messiah's empire was to arise, our surprise will be diminished at the large place the Romans occupied in the world. The language of the prophet Daniel on this point is as follows:—

"And in the days of these kings shall the God of

* Dan. viii. 5.

† Far more are to be praised those poets, heathen though we self-complacently style them, who see God under images of Fauns and Naiades, and in nearly if not quite every form of nature, than those who see him not at all,—who can see, with Democritus, atoms and chance everywhere, but God nowhere. These are the men with whom when they die reason dies.

heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever."*

Plutarch records a curious and highly-interesting fact in regard to the progress of the Romans in Asia. When, under Lucullus, the Roman army, in pursuit of Mithridates and Tigranes, his son-in-law, King of Armenia, reached the banks of the Euphrates, (a Roman army now saw this stream for the first time,) he found it "swollen and overflown by reason of the late rains. It was evening when he arrived; and it was necessary he should cross in haste. That same night it began to subside, and with such rapidity that the next morning the river was smaller than usual even in the dry season. The people of the country, seeing little islands rise out of the bed of the channel and the stream breaking gently about them, regarded Lucullus as something more than mortal."† Such was the entrance of the Romans into Farther Asia; and it is not very remarkable that Lucullus regarded as divine the dream in which a person appeared to him and said, "Go forward, Lucullus!" Did not Alexander the Great conceive himself to be moved by a similar divine impulse? and who is there that listeneth who will not hear a voice speaking to his inmost soul? If God

* Dan. ii. 45.

† Plut. Life of Lucullus. Are we to confine the providence of God to one people or to limit it to one nation? Is not this a most narrow view of the scope of the divine government? Among all people and in all events his providence is ever at work; and strange, indeed, if his hand should not once in a while be as plainly manifest in his dealings with men as in the works of his hands.

speaks in the voice of the winds, will he not address his voice to that rational part of man that he has made in his own image, after his own likeness? Or is man the only creature to whom God does not speak?

Under, then, the protecting power of high Heaven, the little one planted on the banks of the Tiber in time became a great nation, under whose branches, as we have seen, Judea found shelter for a season. While Rome was yet strong and powerful, a new kingdom was to arise, whose origin, beyond all doubt, was to be divine,—which in process of time should “break in pieces and consume all the kingdoms of the earth, but which itself should last forever.”*

This time had now arrived. In such an era of Roman greatness and power was it to arise as the nation had never before reached.

Cicero tells us that never had such a number of illustrious men lived as at this period of Roman history,—in this age (say from the birth to the death of Cæsar Augustus) called emphatically THE AUGUSTAN AGE. What names adorn that period! Literature, we are told, did not take its rise in Rome till after the subjugation of Greece; and but few names embellish its earlier literary annals. Livius Andronicus† was among the first,—if not the first. His models were the productions of Greek writers. A few names followed,—among which are those of Plautus and Terence, the latter of whom translated one hundred and eight comedies of Menander into Latin. Not an historian arose, whose works or name have been preserved, till the pregnant

* Dan. ii. 44.

† He was by birth a Greek.

Augustan age. Then, it would seem, just as earth's new king was about to be born, and a new era of time to begin, star after star arose, the horizon adorning, till all the heavens were in a flame of light. The glory of the age was its literature. Then flourished a whole galaxy of poets. Then was written that immortal poem, the *Æneid*. Virgil, fired by Homer, essayed to rival his flame and to link his steed to the same glorious car. From one fountain drank they both their inspiration,—though one may have taken a deeper draught than the other. The epic of Virgil imparts an undying lustre to that age. Then lived the gentle satirist Horace, who vainly sought to stem the tide of luxury, venality, and prodigality. Then was composed that ode, or hymn, in praise of gods and distinguished men, the *Carmen Seculare*, for the celebration of the Secular Games, (so called because performed but once in the space of a hundred secular years,) which for a spirit of reverence and holy joy only sinks below Jewish strains because the subject is less elevated. On this occasion Horace put forth his highest efforts, and produced a hymn which, says one, “in variety and grandeur of invocation, and in pomp of numbers, surpassed all that Greece ever poured forth from her vocal groves in solemn adoration.” Within the limits of the Augustan age lived Cicero, “the most illustrious prose-writer of that or any age.” Then wrote Livy, whose fame, we are informed, was such that from the extremity of Spain and Gaul came his admirers just to see so celebrated a writer. Then Sallust composed his two master-pieces, the *Conspiracy of Catiline*, and the *War of Jugurtha*. What a pregnant pen is his! What pictures he draws

of the times ! How vivid his descriptions of character ! With what conciseness and energy he explores and lays open the human heart ! Other writers of great merit adorned this age. Among the number stands Julius Cæsar, unsurpassed for simplicity of style, lucidity and order of arrangement, and interest (with the exception of Sallust) of narrative. But we cannot much further enumerate. Rome knew no age like this, before or since. Civilization also, at this period, embraced a wider extent of our earth than at any former period. Under one sway, also, were united the most civilized nations ; and what transpired in one part, however remote, was quickly communicated to the other. This was the period chosen by Infinite Wisdom for the birth of Christ,—the Saviour of the world,—amid the far-spread illumination and civilization of the Augustan age.

CHAPTER I.

AGRIPPA'S VISIT TO JERUSALEM.

It was upon Agrippa's second visit to the East that he came to the city of Jerusalem upon the pressing invitation of Herod. When he came first, he came self-banished from Rome,—piqued because he thought Augustus showed young Marcellus, his sister Octavia's son, his adopted son and heir, those favors that for so long a time he had mostly engrossed. This led

Augustus, in speaking of his two principal friends and confidants, Mæcenas and Agrippa, to complain of the impatience of the one and the loquacity of the other. With all his merit, Augustus thought, Agrippa was too ready to take offence, and was displeased with Marcellus, and jealous of him, without any good ground. In a pet, the old favorite withdrew to the isle of Lesbos, and took up his abode in the city of Mitylene, the chief city of the island. After an absence of two years, Augustus recalled him to Rome, intending to visit the East himself. During the absence of Augustus from Rome, and his stay in the East, which lasted two entire years, Agrippa supplied his place in the west. This speaks well for the moderation of Augustus, and for the friendship of the two old friends; for, as we have seen, they were friends together in early life.

Things were changed now in Rome, for Marcellus was dead, and Augustus wished Agrippa to marry his own daughter Julia, left a widow by the death of Marcellus. This he did, having first dissolved his marriage with one of the Marcellas, a daughter of Octavia. Augustus asked of his sister to give him her son-in-law; and so the new marriage between Agrippa and Julia was consummated. From this union came three sons, Caius, Lucius, and Agrippa, and two daughters, Agrippina and Julia. It could not have been a very happy match; for Julia, though the daughter of Augustus, was one of the most shameless women in Rome. Augustus was any thing but happy either in his daughter or granddaughter; for the second Julia, Agrippa's youngest daughter, trod in the steps of her mother.

After this, an interval of some five years having in-

tervened since he was there before, Agrippa came again to the East, as Prefect of Syria and Phœnicia; and now it was that, entertaining a lively friendship for Herod, he sailed with his fleet to Cæsarea, where he was met and entertained by Herod. A Roman fleet was now moored in the new and capacious harbor of Cæsarea, for the harbor, we may conclude, was at this time finished; and the city far advanced toward completion. That Herod's heart was highly elated at the sight, there can be no doubt, as next to a visit from Augustus was this of Agrippa's with the Roman fleet. Higher honor the Jewish king could scarcely receive; and Augustus would learn from Agrippa's own lips of the new city he had built and called after him. Here, he pointed out to Agrippa, was the theatre,—there the amphitheatre,—there the temple seated on an eminence, built expressly in honor of Augustus, and containing his statue, as a work of art rivalling, no doubt, any that the age had produced.

Agrippa made quite an extensive tour through the land with Herod. Among other places, he visited Samaria; and then, wending their way southward, they viewed the fortresses of Alexandrium, Hyrcania, and Machærus, all of which Herod had repaired and put in complete order. From the walls of Machærus, situated on the eastern shore of that sea, near where the Jordan empties its swift waters into it by a narrow outlet, Agrippa looked down upon quite a populous town that had grown up at the foot of the high hill on which the fortress stood. Last of all, Agrippa came to Jerusalem. Herod had greatly adorned this city, and at this very time the Temple was undergoing

an entire renovation. Herod was rebuilding it anew from its very foundations; and thousands of people were engaged upon it. A year and a half had now elapsed since the work of reconstruction commenced; and the Temple *proper** was already finished,—that is, the porch, the holy place, and the most holy. The white marble stones of this building, which were remarkable for their size and high polish, were looked upon by the admiring eyes of him who built the Pantheon in Rome. Herod's new palace on Zion's hill (the old palace of the Maccabees had been converted into a fortress and called *Antonia*) was then also built, in which were two rooms of uncommon magnificence, called after the Roman fashion, one of them after Agrippa, the other after Cæsar.† Agrippa was very much pleased with his visit to the Holy City. On his entrance the whole population came forth in their festival attire to meet him; and he himself, ere he left, offered a hecatomb at the Temple and feasted the entire population. With what feelings he offered the sacrifice it is hard to say; but it would appear to have been in imitation of the offerings presented at heathen altars, which, when made on some very signal occasion, were just of this number. On the part of Agrippa, it was, most

* Eight years elapsed from this time before the courts and porticoes were completed; nine years and a half in all for building the Temple and its courts; but workmen were employed on it long afterward, so that *forty-six years* had passed away, in the time of our Saviour, and workmen were yet engaged on it.

† One of the most magnificent rooms in Lucullus's house was called Apollo. The charge of an entertainment in this room was fifty thousand drachmas, without respect to the number invited. Cicero and Pompey supped with him one evening.—no others; and this was the cost of the extravagant entertainment.

likely, an act of policy. There is a religion that regards all acts of worship with equal indifference; and the builder of the Pantheon, for the sake of pleasing the people and gratifying Herod, took this method of showing his good will, hardly, perhaps, weighing the difference between the spiritual worship of the Jewish temple and that of Greece and Rome. Thus closed the visit of Agrippa to Jerusalem. He would have prolonged it, but winter was at hand, and it was necessary he should be in Ionia. Embarking at Cæsarea, and leaving the port, with its great images of stone, on either side, he steered for the Ægean Sea.

CHAPTER II.

ALEXANDER AND ARISTOBULUS, SONS OF MARIAMNE.

MANY years had elapsed since the death of Mariamne. Her two sons, Alexander and Aristobulus, growing up to man's estate, Herod sent them to Rome to finish their education. Each of his sons had a tutor: their names were Andromachus and Gemellus. They were special friends of Herod, and men that were of the highest reputation. Herod, designing these two sons as his successors, spared no pains with their education. They were tall and handsome youths, and excelled, like their father, in every athletic sport. Herod could cast a spear or shoot an arrow with great dexterity;

he excelled also in horsemanship. His sons—especially Alexander—were proficient in all manly exercises. How often must they have recalled to their father the image of the murdered Mariamne! What sharp pangs, unnoted, does the human heart suffer which are never syllabled to human ear! What we feel most keenly cannot be expressed.

Alexander and Aristobulus were quite young when they went to Rome. They were intended to be placed under the care of Pollio,* a very particular friend of their father's; but Augustus (we may judge, from this, of his friendship to Herod) furnished the young men with apartments in his own palace.

At first Augustus lived in a house once occupied by Calvus the orator, near the Roman Forum, above the Ringmakers' stairs. He then moved into a small, plain house of Hortensius, on the Palatine Hill;† but when the sons of Herod were with him he lived in his own palace, which he had built on the same hill.

Six years were passed by the brothers, the two sons of Mariamne, in Rome. Rhetoric, or the art of declaiming, was the chief study of the Romans; and in this Alexander, especially, made great proficiency. Among their studies was geography, then cultivated with

* This was Asinius Pollio, to whom Virgil dedicated his 4th Eclogue,—the one that speaks of the coming of Christ and celebrates his reign of righteousness and peace. Pollio was consul the year that Herod first came to Rome, when, by the favor of Antony and Augustus, he was made King of the Jews. Then possibly the friendship began. The Eclogue of Virgil was written about that time. The Georgics were finished and read by Virgil to Augustus, at Atella, after the battle of Actium. Augustus stopped at this place four days to rest on his return to Rome.

† Suet. sect. 72.

success by Strabo, who lived at this time, and perhaps natural history, of which Virgil was so fond. The Latin and Greek languages were here, no doubt, acquired; for Herod was far more solicitous that his sons should excel in the polite literature of the day than that they should be well versed in their own divine law. They did not, however, have access to the works of Cicero. The name of Cicero was not mentioned in the palace of Cæsar; and if any of his works were read, it was by stealth.*

On the *Campus Martius*, with the principal Roman youth, they pursued their exercises; and here perhaps they attained that skill in horsemanship and in arms of which we have spoken. Alexander in every manly exercise stood first among his compeers,—equalling, if not excelling, all the youth that assembled on that ancient field. In this vicinity, as our readers will recollect, was the prison of their great-grandfather, Aristobulus.† Did they not visit the prison—the old Mamertine prison—on the side of the Capitoline Hill?

It was while Alexander and Aristobulus resided in Rome that Augustus was absent on his visit to the East, and that Agrippa, having lately married Julia, daughter of Augustus, ruled the empire for him. To them was Julia known, and while they were in Rome

* "I am informed," says Plutarch, "Cæsar, going to see one of his grandsons, found him with a book of Cicero in his hands. The boy, alarmed at the accident, endeavored to hide the book under his robe, which Cæsar perceived, and took it from him: and, after having run most of it over as he stood, he returned it, and said, 'My dear child, this was an eloquent man, and a lover of his country.'"

† See book iii. p. 49 of this work.

* Life of Cicero.

was that daughter born in respect to whom and her mother Augustus, with a heavy sigh, would say,—

“Would I without a wife or child had died!”*

To them was known Livia Drusilla, wife of Augustus, who hovered as a baneful meteor in his house over the posterity of Augustus,—never varying for a long course of years in her policy to remove, either by poison or by some other method, all that stood between her son Tiberius and the empire. She had the art to conceal her real character from her husband as long as he lived.

Having finished their education at Rome, the young men returned to Jerusalem. Their handsome appearance, their generous ardour, their manliness, won them much favor; and, being looked upon as the successors to the kingdom, many paid court to them. Under the appearance of friendship there were those belonging to their circle who were hostile to their father, who spoke to them of their illustrious descent on their mother's side, perhaps reflecting on the meaner origin of Herod. Age is not always wary: the incautiousness of youth should not, therefore, surprise us. Evil-minded persons who had stored up the past history of their house came

* Suet. sect. 65. Grief, that enters everywhere, had found its way into the palace of Cæsar Augustus. His wife Livia took good care to prejudice his mind against his grandsons, Caius, Lucius, and Agrippa,—these young men sharing the sad fate of Alexander and Aristobulus. and from the same cause. As to Julia, daughter of Augustus, some have thought that her shameless profligacy may in part, at least, be attributed to the dark policy of Livia. This bad woman had but one aim,—to obtain the succession for her first-born Tiberius. She was the instigator of the untimely deaths of Caius and Lucius, and after the death of Augustus, with Tiberius, ordered Agrippa to be slain.

to them with the story of their mother, their grandfather, and their uncle Aristobulus, the youthful high-priest.

At the time of their mother's death, they were too young to receive the full impression of her fate. They were also kept out of the way. The lips of their attendants were sealed: they missed the well-known face; they asked for her; but no answer came, and she was seen by them no more. But now the dismal story is rehearsed by those who would gladly stir up strife. Envious, jealous, hateful men, of evil minds, sowed the dragon-teeth of discord in the family of Herod.

Not long after their return, they were married. Their father sought suitable alliances for them. Alexander, the eldest son, married Glaphyra, daughter of Archelaus, King of Cappadocia. Aristobulus was married to Berenice, his aunt Salome's daughter, the same who was chiefly accessory to the fate of Mariamne.

Three years had glided by from the time of their return, and sons and daughters were born to both the brothers. It is not easy to trace step by step the rupture between the father and the sons; but the young men, brooding on the past, and stimulated by the hints, the innuendoes, of seeming friends, began to drop words, incautiously, respecting their mother, and eavesdroppers, maliciously disposed, carried these unguarded words to Herod. If a snake had risen up suddenly in his path, the father could not have been more startled. He had thought the memory of that dark transaction buried forever; he himself had suffered all-but death for that rash deed. Now it meets him again, where he least expected it; and his accusers are his own children. By his ten-

der love and care he had tried to expiate the deep wrong he had done their mother; but from her ashes came forth the sparks of a new hate, of (if possible) a direr calamity.

Alarmed by the rumors that fell upon his ears, and revolving in his mind what course to take, the unhappy father took a step that laid the foundation of evil to himself and family for the rest of his life. Irritated by what he had heard, indignant that his sons should bring back the painful past and reflect on his conduct, he recalled Antipater. Ever since his marriage with Mariamne, Herod having divorced his first wife Doris, Antipater had shared his mother's banishment. (Perhaps these terms had been insisted on by the high-minded Mariamne.) How startled must the mother and son have been by the sudden and unexpected recall after the lapse of so many years! Long had Doris brooded over her wrongs, and deep and lasting was the hate she felt for Mariamne and her children.

The arrival of Antipater was the signal for new troubles. Alexander and Aristobulus, deeply offended that one whom they regarded as of very inferior descent should be put on a footing of equality with them, gave full vent to their displeasure. Presuming on their birth, as did their mother, they made free use of their tongues in speaking of this act of Herod's. "Words," saith the wise man, "are as the piercings of a sword." Herod's wrath was soon so greatly inflamed against them, that he substituted Antipater in his will to the succession in their place. And now the contention grew fiercer and fiercer; and the difference between the father and sons wider and wider.

This great change once made known, Antipater soon received the attention that had formerly been bestowed on the sons of Mariamne. There were now not wanting many to bring to Herod every unfavorable word; and soon they were charged with designs upon the life of their father. As to Antipater, his words were as smooth as oil both to his father and his brothers. He took care to say nothing but what would please his father, (for Herod was approachable on the side of flattery;) and while he pretended to apologize for Alexander and his brother on account of their youth and inexperience, he artfully blew the flame to a greater height. Herod, losing the sagacity by which he had been formerly distinguished, heard only with the ears of Antipater and saw only through his eyes, and thought his life in danger. He who had been a terror to others was now in fear for himself, in fear from his own children. Did Mariamne move in her grave? and were the former evil actions of Herod,—the atrocious deeds which he had committed,—after the lapse of so many years, in which vengeance had seemed to sleep, about to descend upon him in the form of retributive justice? Pity 'tis that the children of Mariamne shall be involved in those dreadful evils that are about to visit the house of Herod. To those not favored with the volume of Divine revelation belongs the fearful doctrine of an avenging Deity; and could we not look beyond the outward aspect of things, we might depict a Nemesis, some implacable fate, brooding over the latest posterity of Asamoneus. But we learn from the more sure word of prophecy that what is dark in our

history will be unfolded by-and-by,—when we shall see as we are seen and know as we are known.

Herod, incensed almost to madness, at length determined to carry both his sons to Rome and arraign them before Augustus, on a charge of conspiracy against his life. In the presence of Augustus, however, Alexander pleaded his own cause and that of his brother so effectually that all present were melted into tears, and Augustus dismissed the main charge as wholly unsustained by proof. He likewise reconciled Herod to his sons. Antipater had accompanied his father on this voyage, and was present at the trial; but he held his peace, dreading the keen penetration and the cool, unbiassed judgment of Augustus. He dissembled his grief at the result, and reserved his malice for a more favorable opportunity.

On Herod's voyage back, he stopped at an island off the coast of Cilicia, where Archelaus, the father of Alexander's wife, had a royal residence. Herod expressed his great satisfaction at the happy termination of the trial to Archelaus, who was also highly pleased. Archelaus had previously written to his friends at Rome to assist Alexander at his trial. When Herod came to Jerusalem, he assembled the people together, presented his three sons to them, and publicly gave thanks to God, and to Augustus likewise, who had acted as mediator between him and his sons. Herod made a speech to the people on the occasion, in which he cautioned them not to pay too extravagant marks of attention to his children, informing them at the same time that he should divide his kingdom among them, but that, in consequence of his priority of birth, Antipater had the first place in

his will. He also exhorted his children to concord. "Continue," he said, "brethren."*

This is the first act in this dark drama. The second is now to follow. Surely here are the elements of a tragedy as dark, nearly, as that of *Œdipus*. What would not an *Æschylus*—of whom it has been said, in his own language,—

"Before him strides
Gigantic Terror, towering to the skies,"†

have done with this tragic story in the house of a Jewish king,—elements not fictitious, but all too real!

Peace was restored to the palace for a little season; but soon the discord began anew, with harsher din and fiercer conflict than before. Doris, the repudiated wife of Herod, had returned; the son had brought back the mother; and both, in hellish league, conjoined against the sons of *Mariamne*.

With the terms of reconciliation neither side was pleased, neither the brothers nor Antipater. Antipater could not endure that the sons of *Mariamne* should have any share in the kingdom; Alexander and Aristobulus deemed it a stain upon the nobility of their birth that their father should have preferred Antipater to them. Here was matter for discord among brethren,—especially when a kingdom was at stake. If we contend—as we often do—so fiercely for the veriest trifles, what wonder if we contend when the greatest prize earth has to offer is at stake?—for the kingdoms of this world, and the glory of them, was all that Satan had to offer to the Son

* Joseph. Jewish War, book i. chap. 23, sect. 5. † *Æschyl.* in *Agam.*

of God. Another cause that aggravated the discontent of the young men was the want of confidence their father showed to them. Once he had taken them into his councils, but now he unbosomed himself only to Doris and Antipater. Besides, Doris had transferred the bitter feelings she once entertained against the mother to the children of her hated rival. Neither the grave nor time had abated her resentment; and she did all she could to mortify and afflict the young men.* She assiduously strove to inflame Herod, and fanned anew his suspicions. She knew how open he was to suspicion, and that when his passions were excited, or his jealous fear alarmed, he lacked both discernment and judgment. Antipater was a very Iago in cunning and malice. Josephus says of him, "One would not be mistaken if he called the life of Antipater a mystery of wickedness."† Step by step, pretty much by the same process as before, Herod's fears and suspicions were so aroused that he saw once more in his sons only enemies secretly plotting for his life. He had taken suspicion to his bosom a second time; and the last state was worse than the first.

Other evils broke out in this distracted house, and tended more and more to unsettle Herod's mind. Glaphyra, Alexander's wife, made matters worse. Tracing her family back to a high antiquity, and vaunting her-

* "She was one," says Josephus, "that gave counsel against them, and was more harsh than a stepmother, and one that hated the queen's sons more than is usual to hate sons-in-law."*

† Jewish War, book i. chap. 24, sect. 1.

* Jewish War, book i. chap. 24, sect. 2.

self upon her pedigree, she, like Mariamne, treated Salome and her daughter Berenice, her own sister-in-law, with the utmost contempt, as belonging to a family far beneath her own. Here was fresh fuel added to the flame. As for Aristobulus, he spoke reproachfully to Berenice, for the same reason,—that his father had chosen him a wife from so low a family. This exasperated Berenice, who, in her turn, carried her wrongs to her mother, and she to Herod. Pheroras, Herod's brother, as if he would kindle the whole into a blaze, accused Herod to Alexander of an undue attachment to Glaphyra, his own son's wife. Alexander, boiling with indignation, went directly to his father with this story, who, in the most vehement manner, denied the hateful charge. Pheroras laid it upon Salome; Salome, in a fury of passion, hurled it back upon Pheroras as the author. All the elements of discord were at work,—hatred, malice, revenge: Herod was driven to his wit's end; he had no rest, day or night. Not a single hour of peace did he enjoy.

A yet darker cloud arose; a heavier storm burst upon the devoted house. Herod had three eunuchs, in whom he reposed the most entire confidence, and who were advanced to the first offices in his household. These, he was told, had been corrupted by Alexander; and when they were tortured, (which, to please Antipater, the executioners made as severe as possible,) they confessed that Alexander said many reprehensible things against his father, and, what stung Herod to the quick,—that Alexander had told them that he was regarded by the chief men in the kingdom as his father's successor, and that already “the captains of the soldiery and the

officers did secretly come to him." It is hard, however, to give much credence to a confession wrung from quivering lips, and limbs torn and dislocated by "the rack stretched to the very utmost," as was the case in this instance.

Herod's suspicious nature was now all on fire. He no longer knew whom to believe or to trust. There was no one, scarcely, that he did not suspect, save the guilty author of all this mischief, Antipater. He looked with an evil eye both upon those who frequented and those who absented themselves from the palace. He ordered his son Alexander to be seized and bound. He had spies out in every direction; and to be suspected even of disloyalty involved sentence of death. Informers arose on every hand; for if one had a grudge against another, let him but lodge an information of treason with Herod, and death was sure to follow. A sort of madness possessed Herod, as if he thought everybody was conspiring against his life, "insomuch that the palace was full of horribly unjust proceedings." The friends of Alexander were tortured to death, because they would not confess that they were privy to his treasonable acts. Some, however, in the extremity of their anguish, and to obtain relief, did say that Alexander and Aristobulus intended to kill their father as he was a-hunting; and these confessions, extorted by pain, "were readily believed by the king." Herod was brought to such a degree of terror, in the course of these proceedings, as to imagine he saw Alexander with a drawn sword in his hand coming against him. Had his crimes found him out at last? Was it not rather the pale and beautiful corpse of Aristobulus, stretched on the damp ground,

as it was taken out of the pond where he had been drowned by his order, that he saw advancing upon him, and not that of his son? Was it not the headless trunk of the aged king Hyrcanus—his father's friend, and his friend—that he saw pursuing him with an avenging cry? Do the guilty expect to escape? Do the workers of iniquity suppose they shall not be overtaken? Sooner or later the bolt, long suspended, will fall on the head of the guilty, and they shall not escape. There is no avenging Nemesis; but the justice of God is proclaimed against transgressors; and though "hand join in hand, the wicked will not go unpunished." Wrath was upon the guilty Herod; and his magnificent palace was turned into a slaughter-house, as was Sylla's when the principal citizens of Rome were butchered in it like cattle.*

But at the moment when a fatal catastrophe appeared inevitable, suddenly the tempest lulled, and a second suspicious calm ensued.

Tidings of these transactions came to Archelaus, together with the account of the imminent danger of his son-in-law. With all possible haste he came to Jerusalem; but when he arrived, as if understanding how to deal with

* When Cato[†] was a boy, owing to the friendship which had subsisted between Sylla and his father, Sylla sometimes sent for him and his brother Cæpio. Sarpeton, their tutor, went with them. Sylla's house at that time looked like nothing but a place of execution, such were the numbers of people tortured and put to death there. Cato, now fourteen years old, seeing the heads of many illustrious personages carried out, and observing that the bystanders sighed in secret at the scenes of blood, asked his preceptor, "Why somebody did not kill that man?" "Because," said he, "they fear him more than they hate him." "Why, then," said Cato, "do you not give me a sword, that I may kill him, and deliver my country from slavery?"†

* The younger, or Utican Cato.

† Life of Cato, Plut.

Herod's moody humor, he at first pretended the greatest indignation against his son-in-law. "Where is this murderer, this parricide?" he said. "Let him die. And this daughter of mine,—the wife of one polluted with so heavy crimes,—let her die with him." So he went on, out-heroding Herod, surpassing Herod in the fury of his ire and the violence of his invective, until this very intemperance of rage mollified Herod,* and he actually began to intercede with Archelaus in behalf both of his son and daughter. Archelaus allowed himself to be gradually appeased, and then dispassionately examined the charges brought against Alexander. Ere long Herod began to see with new eyes; and, his understanding returning to him, he found that his sons were more sinned against than sinning, he saw how baseless his cowardly suspicions were; and ere Archelaus departed a second reconciliation took place between the father and his sons. Antipater was foiled once more.

We now come to the third and last act of this domestic tragedy.

A new actor appears,—one Eurycles, a Spartan. Owing to the affinity that was thought to subsist between the Lacedemoneans and the Jews,† as derived from one common ancestor, Abraham, this person was received with extraordinary favor in Jerusalem. Not only Herod and his sons, but the principal citizens, received him with great cordiality. He soon found how the house of

* Surely Archelaus did not treat Herod as a sane person. Herod's own conduct was rather that of a foolish child than a man. Had his understanding, so sound, so strong, departed from him? It would seem so.

† The claim of affinity was put in by the Lacedemonians themselves. See Joseph. Antiq. book xii. chap. 4, sect. 10. Ibid. book xviii. chap. 5, sect. 8. See also book i. p. 9, of this work.

Herod was divided against itself: for the commotion was hardly settled ere it began again,—father against son, and son against father. Designing to make gain of all, and delighting in mischief, as it would seem, from the love of it, as if he were an evil fiend, he, with an artifice far beyond that of Antipater, soon set every jarring element in motion. A voluptuary, covetous, extravagant, he contrived to hide these vices and to appear the very reverse of what he was. He wore a mask* which completely concealed his real character. He had the art to gain the entire confidence of Alexander and Aristobulus, while at the same time he lived in the house of Antipater. Among other false representations, he led Alexander to think he was a particular friend of Archelaus, his father-in-law. He soon induced both brothers to unbosom themselves to him, and the long tale of pent-up grief and injury came forth. They spoke of their mother,—of her death,—of the cruelty of Herod. They spoke of the kingdom as if it belonged rightfully to them as the lineal descendants of its ancient princes; but Herod, they said, not content with depriving them of it, was about to convey it to a spurious successor. The young men may have said as much as this; but when Eurycles said they confessed to a design of taking their father's life, and appeasing the manes of Hyrcanus and Mariamne, there is no doubt he told what was false. The arch-plotter pretended to sympathize with them in their griefs and wrongs, and said it was a great wrong that they, so illustrious by their descent, should be superseded by one of so mean an origin as Antipater. The

* This is the meaning of the word "Lypocrite." In Syriac this meaning is brought out very clearly.

traitor hastens with his story to Antipater, annexing to it a fiction of his own,—that Antipater's own life was in danger from the bitter enmity of his brothers. And now, changing his part, he pretended to condole with Antipater on the ground of his seniority, as if it would be most unjust that he, the elder brother, should be expected to yield the kingdom to those younger than himself. Thus was he one thing to Antipater, another to Alexander and Aristobulus. As to Antipater, he had now a new motive to injure his brothers,—the fear of his own life. Giving his informant a large sum of money, Antipater sent Eurycles to Herod. Presenting himself to the king as a friend, whose ear he had previously gained by flattery, and extolling the filial piety of Antipater, he recounted what he had heard, exaggerating and highly coloring his story. He said, “a sword had long been whetted, and Alexander's right hand stretched out against him.” He informed Herod, in addition, that his sons meant to fly to Archelaus first, and then to Rome, to demand justice of Augustus for their murdered mother and the aged Hyrcanus, and that they would expose the cruelty and wickedness of Herod in the management of his kingdom.

From this time forth the fury of Herod was ungovernable. He heaped gifts on Eurycles, and called him his saviour and friend.* After this, not one favorable word would he listen to in behalf of his sons. There was, at this very time, in Jerusalem, one Euratus, of the island of Cos, an intimate friend of Alexander's, who,

* Herod's sense left him again: for he gave way wholly to passion, and called not reason to his aid. The loss of the full exercise of the understanding is one of the fruits of sin.

when questioned by Herod, wholly denied that Alexander was guilty of any designs against the life of his father; but his denial made no impression on Herod. He sent again to Augustus, on account of the designs of his sons; and Augustus advised that they should be tried at Berytus. Before a full assembly, the father appeared as the accuser of his sons; and, though the voice of the court was not unanimous, the majority, swayed by Herod, condemned the young men to death. They were not heard in their own defence.

The whole kingdom heard with concern the verdict, and waited to see if Herod would execute his own sons. For a while he stood in suspense; but one *Tero*, an old soldier, speaking to him very plainly and telling him that the army sympathized with the young men and blamed him, he delayed no longer. This was a sensitive chord. The fears and jealousy of Herod took quick alarm at these rash words of the well-meaning soldier. He sent the young men not to Jerusalem, but to Sebaste, (the ancient Samaria,) where they were strangled. Thus died, in their early bloom, the two eldest sons of Mariamne,—Alexander and Aristobulus.

We are now in advance of our history; but we wished not to divide the sad tale. As it is, we have but cursorily glanced at it. Their death happened in the same year in which the angel Gabriel appeared to Zacharias in the Temple; that announcement preparing the way for a new competitor—in Herod's distempered mind—for the throne. It is easy to see how, in his present frame, this news would excite Herod, when, not long after, the word ran as wildfire through the city that certain men had arrived from the East with the question, "Where is he

that is born King of the Jews?" He who, from fear of the rivalry of his own sons, had but a short time before put them to death, would be the last person to welcome this new aspirant to his throne.

The death of his sons did not end the disorders in Herod's house. Antipater was still alive: he had succeeded in removing his brothers out of his way; his next step was to remove his father. The real parricide yet lived.

CHAPTER III.

CELEBRATION OF GAMES AT CÆSAREA.

THE conquest of the East and the overthrow of the Medo-Persian empire by Alexander the Great changed the entire face of things in Asia. From the first the Jews stood high in favor of the conqueror, and so they did in that of his successors. Both by Alexander and the first Ptolemy (Ptolemy *Soter*) of Egypt, they were planted in Alexandria and favored with the most distinguished privileges. As to Seleucus *Nicator*, (the first of the Seleucidæ,) the founder of the Greek-Syrian empire, they were held in equal esteem. At Antioch, as at Alexandria, they were endowed with all the privileges and immunities of that flourishing city. But, while they thus settled among the Greeks, learned their language, and were more familiar with the Greek (the Septuagint translation, as it is called) than the Hebrew

Scriptures, they kept themselves, as a nation, entirely distinct, observed the Sabbath and their holy days, and were the same people in a strange land as in their own. It was reserved for Herod to attempt systematically, and on a large scale, to defeat the design of God, and to amalgamate the Jews with the rest of the nations of the earth, or, at least, to induce them to conform in part to Grecian customs and to adopt Roman manners. In carrying out this plan he had built Cæsarea, naming it after Cæsar Augustus and making it more a Greek than a Jewish city. Its dedication, after he had fully completed it, was after the fashion of the Greeks, not of the Jews.

These games of Greece were first introduced, in their original splendor, into Syria, by Antiochus Epiphanes. The first of the Greek-Syrian kings, Seleucus Nicator, a wise and excellent king, had laid out, at Daphne,* a sacred grove in imitation of that at Olympia in Peloponnesus, erected a temple in it, made it an asylum, and dedicated it to Apollo and Diana. It was a beautiful grove, planted with the tall cypress, laid out in walks and lawns, watered by streams, and ornamented by fountains. The air was pure and soft and sweet: it was one of nature's loveliest sylvan scenes, aided by all the beauty the highest art could bestow. It was meant by its founder to be a sacred spot; but it soon degenerated from its original design, and became famed, like the shrine of the Cytherean Venus, for its evil manners. Here was the spot, in the vicinity of Antioch, within the

* Daphne was a suburb of Antioch, and was distant from it four or five miles.

compass of this spacious grove,* this sweet garden-spot, where, on a most magnificent scale, Antiochus Epiphanes, for a number of days, celebrated those far-famed games in which an Ajax and a Ulysses had contended (to so remote an age do they reach) and an Achilles distributed the prizes to the victors.†

Now these games, intermixed with those which were more particularly Roman, are about to be celebrated on Jewish ground, to take the place of Jewish rites, festivals, and holy solemnities.

They occurred, we should judge, somewhere about the time Archelaus had effected a second temporary reconciliation between Herod and his sons, and when the unhappy king had a short respite from domestic infelicities.

Herod had made great preparations for the important occasion; and unhappy as he was at the time in his domestic relations, and dark as the picture was within the precincts of the palace, all was pomp and glare, gayety and gladness, on Judea's favored shore, to the crowds of strangers brought together to celebrate the dedicatory festival of the new city. With flowing purple robe, with "diadem studded with jewels,"‡ with

* The grove of Daphne was ten miles in circuit. † Iliad, book 23.

‡ See Marini, an Italian poet, his poem on the "murder of the innocents." Marini was a friend of Tasso. His poetical talents are spoken of in high terms. The subject of his poem was the massacre of the children of Bethlehem by Herod after he had been baffled by the wise men. After the death of Tasso, Marini stood first as a poet. See the Life of Poussin, the painter, in one of the most pleasing of works, "The Old Painters." The author of this work is a lady of high culture, and holding a most genial pen. Happy are we to have it in our power to pay this slight tribute to her pen. Happy and useful hours do we owe her.

smiling face, and a manner most gracious, Herod presented himself to the vast multitude. Little did that multitude conceive of him as emerging just then from his own house as a beast of prey, gorged with blood and sated with victims. If his sons Alexander and Aristobulus were with him,—as no doubt they were,—they could scarcely share in the general joy without trembling. The fierceness of the tempest, 'tis true, had then passed; but they knew not how soon it might return. There was Antipater, cajoling his father by flattering words, while in his heart he hated the very sight of him. As he surveyed the fair scene, the gorgeous decorations,—decorations to which Livia Drusilla, the wife of the emperor Augustus, had contributed, (they were sent all the way from Rome,)—he thought in his heart, “This all shall soon be mine: this city, with its magnificent palaces, this land, this kingdom, will be soon mine.” In that unfathomable abyss, an evil heart, amid all this festive splendour, he studied how he should renew domestic difficulties and revive the slumbering embers of his father's easily-awakened jealousy.

How gay a spectacle Herod's new harbor must have formed at this time! There was the vessel that brought the magnificent furniture of Livia from Rome, having sailed down the Tiber, leaving Ostia, and launching out on the sea. How many more vessels were there from Rome and the Tiber! The fame of Herod, the celebrity of his new city, the rumored magnificence of the games, attracted many from thence. Among the crowds that filled the vessels were gladiators of great note, whose services Herod hired at vast expense. Actors and

mimics also were of the number, introduced now by Herod, it may be, for the first time, to a Jewish audience, on Jewish soil. Greece sent forth its competitors. Herod had made himself very popular in Greece by reviving the Olympic games; he had himself been a combatant in them, and had settled on them certain revenues in perpetuity. Grateful for his princely gifts, the Eleans had made Herod the Gymnasiarch or President during his life;* and now, at his bidding, many a vessel from many a Grecian port, and from the Piræus in particular, lay in the harbor. Rhodes, a sort of commercial emporium, had its complement there. Herod had always been a benefactor of the Rhodians: he had sent them large sums of money to assist them in building their ships. Many a Rhodian galley was now moored alongside of Herod's noble mole. But we will no further enumerate. Possibly the harbor, large as it was, scarcely contained the vessels. Every vessel was gayly decked; colors were flying from every mast, and the ribbons and pennons were as rich and varied as the plumage of birds; while at night variegated lamps suspended to masts and rigging and hulks lit up the scene and made the waters shine as if it was day. Thousands of pleased spectators walked round the magnificent mole, crowding

* Originally none but Greeks of pure Hellenic descent were allowed to contend in these games, and the presiding officers, or judges, we are told, were chosen from the whole body of the Eleans. In the time of Herod they appear to have deviated from this strictness; and those rules that once required the kings of Macedon to prove their Grecian descent before they were admitted as combatants were now so relaxed as to admit a Jewish king not only to compete for the prize, but to be selected as the chief presiding officer during the august ceremonies. Or did they receive Herod, on the testimony of Sparta, as of the same descent as themselves?

the esplanade that Herod had built around its entire extent. Night and day the scene of festivity was kept up; while the whole assemblage were feasted at the expense of Herod. Free tables were set for all comers. Amid the display, and the universal laudation he received, did Herod temporarily forget his domestic trials? His fears, did they vanish? Or was he more or less in fear all the time? Would, for a moment, suspicion, like a sudden dart, pierce his heart, in spite of himself?

Each day was appropriated to certain games. Among the Greeks the game of the *cæstus* was the only bloody and cruel part of their sacred games,* when with their iron gauntlets the boxers dealt each other such heavy blows, those gauntlets that, levelled at the ox, battered his skull and drove through his bones.† But Herod had here men to fight with men in deadly combat, or else with wild beasts; and men's eyes were to be feasted, on Salem's ground, as in Rome, with the gladiator expiring in death, slain by the sword of a rival combatant or gored to death by infuriated wild beasts. Was this a proper sight for this soil so sacred,—this land consecrated to the worship of the one living and true God? Even the spectacle of beasts contending with beasts was a sad sight,—one that the humane and tender-hearted Cicero turned away from in pain at a grand display given by Pompey at the dedication of his new theatre

* On this account the Spartans rejected it. Homer speaks thus of it:—
Tydides is preparing Euryalus for this combat:—

“Officious with the cincture girds him round;

And to his wrist the gloves of death are bound.” Book xxiii. *Iliad*.

† *Æneid*, book v.

in Rome. And were eyes taught pity by the law of Moses, and compassion to beasts, to be entertained by such sights?

Other spectacles there were, of a more pleasing description,—which in their early origin were meant to train to activity, hardihood, temperance, and valor. These had their turn. There were those, for instance, that with swift foot ran for the prize,—Herod, for the encouragement of those that entered the lists, setting apart rewards for the second and even the third successful competitor. At a given signal,

“All start at once,”

each one, “graceful in motion,” in the wake of the other

“As closely following as the running thread
The spindle follows.”*

Next the fleet coursers speed them o’er the plain, each charioteer seeking to bring his axle, “the wheels’ round naves,” as closely as possible to the goal, so as to double it with the least waste of precious space, and yet so as to clear as by a single hair “the stony heap.”†

On Judea’s ground was now seen what Homer had so long since sung as he described Achilles’ celebration of the funeral rites of Patroclus:—

“At once the coursers from the barrier bound;
The lifted scourges all at once resound;

* Iliad, book xxiii. lines 890, 891.

† The sage Nestor’s advice to his son how “swift round the goal to turn the flying wheel.” Iliad, book xxiii.

Their heart, their eyes, their voice, they send before,
 And up the champaign thunder from the shore :
 Thick, where they drive, the dusty clouds arise,
 And the lost courser in the whirlwind flies :
 Loose on their shoulders the long manes, reclined,
 Float in their speed, and dance upon the wind ;
 The smoking chariots, rapid as they bound,
 Now seem to touch the sky, and now the ground.

"While hot for fame, and conquest all their care,
 (Each o'er his flying courser hung in air,)
 Erect with ardor, poised upon the rein,
 They pant, they stretch, they shout along the plain.
 Now the last compass fetch'd, around the goal,
 At the near prize each gathers all his soul,
 Each burns with double hope, with double pain,
 Tears up the shore, and thunders toward the main.

But we will not follow these scenes. We take but a partial glimpse of them. Homer has sung them in full and glowing measure; and Virgil has, for the most part, feebly copied his great original.† Blended with religious rites, unmixed with the cruel contests of the gladiatorial arena that grew up under the shadow of a city dedicated to Mars, the god of war,—imperial Rome,—and at first regarded as exercises necessary to health and strength, in which all the youth of Greece participated as a part of their education,—they may have had, and did have, their use; but here, on Jewish ground, they formed a strange, a novel, feature. The Jewish in-

* Iliad, book xxiii. from line 437 to line 450.

† It is a little curious how exactly, (we might say tamely,) in shooting the arrow at the trembling dove fastened to the high mast, Virgil has imitated Homer.* It would seem as if Virgil's invention was weak,—this faculty that marks genius in the highest sense of the term.

* Æneid, book v.

stitutions were from God, and had but one end,—not the cultivation of a spirit of worldly glory as an incentive to action, not the thirst of applause, but the love and fear of God, as the ground and spring of human conduct. Viewed in this light, the games of Greece—aside from the brutal spectacle of the arena—were wholly opposed to the spirit and religious rites of God's peculiar people; and whatever celebrity Herod acquired in the eyes of surrounding nations, (which was his ruling motive in all these departures from the customs of his nation,) to every true Jewish heart they must have sent a pang of keenest anguish, while in the sight of God they constituted a departure from his law, and could not fail to bring down his displeasure upon the guilty violator.

CHAPTER IV.

THE UNIVERSAL EXPECTATION.

TIME is an epic, man the actor, sin and its deeds the subject. Time is an epic, God the actor, and his righteousness—the righteousness of God, not of man—the great theme.

This is the burden of prophecy from first to last. Man, by one act of disobedience,—

“Brought death into the world, and all our woe,
With loss of Eden.”

And "to restore us"—to enable us to "regain the blissful seat" we had lost, "one greater man" has the work undertaken.

From the first promise till the advent of Christ Jesus the Lord into our world, all the prophets have spoken of this; for the theme of prophecy throughout its entire extent, even to the final consummation, is neither more nor less than "the restitution of all things."* This is the work the Son of God has undertaken to perform, and this is the work he will fully accomplish. God will vindicate himself: he will "assert his own eternal providence," and, sooner or later, "justify his ways to men."†

As the time drew nigh for Christ to be born, there was a general, a universal expectation of it. It was not confined to the Jews: it extended over the entire East, and it reached also to the West. It would indeed have been remarkable if an event so great in itself, and so

* The whole of this remarkable passage reads thus:—"And he shall send Jesus Christ, who before was preached unto you, whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." Acts iii. 20, 21.

† The reader will of course recall these familiar words; but the prayer or invocation of the poet to the Spirit is so pure and sublime that we copy it entire:—

"And chiefly thou, O Spirit, that dost prefer,
Before all temples, the upright heart and pure,
Instruct me, for thou know'st. Thou from the first
Wast present, and, with mighty wings outspread,
Dove-like sat'st brooding on the vast abyss,
And mad'st it pregnant. What in me is dark,
Illumine; what is low, raise and support;
That to the height of this great argument
I may assert eternal Providence,
And justify the ways of God to men."*

* Paradise Lost, book i.

vastly important in its results, should not have been generally expected, if a long train of causes had not prepared the way for it.

This expectation had been growing up from the time of the first promise made to Adam and Eve, in the garden of Eden. In the most explicit terms Abraham had been assured that "all the nations of the earth should be blessed in him."* Abraham understood this, not in an equivocal or ambiguous sense, but in all the fulness of its import, as comprising the complete restoration of man to the favor of God, and every other blessing flowing in its train. Abraham did not conceive of God save as the Great and Holy One of Israel who would, in his own time, fully repair the ruins of the fall. The far-off day of the Messiah, Abraham saw: he saw it not only in its dawn, but in its noontide splendor. With all the inspired prophets he saw, not only "the sufferings of Christ," but "the glory that should follow."† The Man of Grief passed before him. When this was shown him, his faith did not stagger: he stumbled not at this stumbling-stone that was to be laid in Zion, but, looking beyond the scene of humiliation, of suffering, and of death, he rejoiced at the inconceivable glory that would flood our world when the concluding scene of the great epic of time should open, and the Prince of this world should be judged,‡ his kingdom overthrown, and himself be bound and cast into the bottomless pit.§

We cannot trace down the long line of prophecy;

* Gen. xviii. 18. † 1 Pet. i. 10. ‡ The whole passage reads as follows:—"Of judgment: because the Prince of this world is judged."* § Rev. xx. 3.

* John xvi. 11.

neither is it necessary. It is interwoven with the whole of revelation; it may indeed be said to comprise the sum of revelation: for apart from "the testimony of Jesus" the Bible would be the most incomprehensible of books. Its miracles would take their place along with the fables of Greek mythology; but, built on the MANIFESTATION OF GOD IN THE FLESH, they are, as the stars to night, fitting accompaniments of that glorious revelation which they adorn and illustrate. We leave, therefore, as a vessel that cuts the still wave at night leaves in its wake a silvery brightness, the distinct examination of the prophecies respecting the coming and the birth of Christ, with the glowing evidence they contain, and place ourselves and our readers for a moment or so at that point of time when expectation was highest, and the whole world was looking (can such another era—when all the world was drawn to one and the same event—be found?) for Christ.

In the distant East, (and by this we mean the region beyond the Euphrates, extending to the Indus,) the expectation was general. The Zendavesta of the Persians,—their sacred book,—being composed, as we have shown, mostly of the Jewish Scriptures, had spread the knowledge of this forthcoming event throughout the provinces that originally comprised the Persian Empire. From the Caspian Sea to the Indian Ocean, from distant Indus to Phœnicia and the Red Sea, to Ethiopia, to the Cataracts of the Nile, the Persian dominion extended; and throughout a large portion of it, especially its eastern portion, the religion that was professed was, essentially, the Jewish religion. And of that religion, as a pillar of fire in the wilderness, the coming of ONE

who was to rule the whole earth, who was to subdue the nations under him, was the principal feature, the great, the wonderful theme. And as the time approached, the Magi, acquainted with it by the study of prophecy, in the same manner as the Jews themselves were made acquainted with it, spoke of the event as close at hand. In their midst had lived and died Daniel; at Susa (the capital of Persia) he lived, as well as at Babylon; and his prophecy of the coming of Christ was part of the Zendavesta, as well as the five books of Moses and the Psalms of David. Here, then, in the distant East, on the borders of the Caspian Sea, along the shores of the Persian Gulf, where the Indian Ocean laves the shore, amid the lovely vales and fruitful plains of Persia, where once stood Persepolis in its glory, where the cities of Susa and Ecbatana still stood, hearts innumerable throbbed with expectation of the coming Christ, the world's deliverer.

Now let us pass to the far West, and see what God has done there.

Before the birth of Christ, many prophecies were abroad, under the name of *Sibyls*. These referred to the commencement of a new age, and to the advent of a most extraordinary person who was then about to appear and to rule the world. As we may gather from Virgil's fourth Eclogue, the subject of them was Christ,—though under another name or form, that of “Cumæan song,” or the song of the Cumæan Sibyl; and they depict just such an age of peace and equity as forms the chief subject of Jewish prophecy. The renovation, or “restitution of all things,” was their theme; a new era, or the beginning of a new age. So Virgil

(we take his eclogue as the representative of these Sibyls, or current prophecies of that age) sings, "The great series of ages begins anew;"* thus, also, the sum of the Jewish Scriptures is contained in this one declaration of God, "Behold, I make all things new."† The meaning of the heathen poet is identical with this expression; for he says "that, every vestige of guilt being done away, the earth will be released from fear forever;"‡ of course there will be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying; all tears will have been wiped away from the eyes. It is observable that Virgil in this eclogue notes the gradual progressiveness of this new age, as if by different stages and at certain intervals of time this great and happy change would be effected. Addressing not only Pollio,§ but a son of his born about this time, (this son died soon after he was born,) he traces the gradual progress of this new age,—beginning with the child in infancy, and following him up to mature manhood. In the infancy of this boy, Virgil, judging from the tenor of numerous prophecies then afloat, sung that the "iron age shall cease, and the golden age over all the world arise." While the boy was an infant it was to begin, the golden age of the world was to have its auspicious commencement. When he should be

* Eclogue IV. The whole sentence is as follows:—"The last era of Cumean song is now arrived: the great series of ages begins anew. Now, too, returns the virgin Astræa,* returns the reign of Saturn; now a new progeny is sent down from high heaven."

† Rev. xxi. 5.

‡ Eclogue IV.

§ This was Asinius Pollio, so particular a friend of Herod the Great.

* Astræa, the goddess of Justice.

able to read "the praises of heroes," the new age would have made great progress: "blushing grapes shall hang on the rude brambles, and hard oaks shall distill the dewy honey;" but when "confirmed age shall have ripened him into man," then the last remaining footsteps of "ancient vice" shall have disappeared from our earth. It is remarkable to note the same gradation in God's holy word.* When all shall have been perfected,

* In the book of the Revelation of St. John the Divine, which opens up this new age and unfolds the various stages by which God will "make all things new"† and "release the earth from fear forever,"‡ it is not difficult to mark the progressive steps by which this wonderful change is to be brought about. The "seven seals," opening one after the other, are seven different and successive stages in the work of the earth's renovation, or that MARKED EPOCH in Divine revelation, "*the restitution of all things.*" God when in the end he arises to judgment does it gently at first: it is not until the seventh and last seal is opened, and the seven trumpets begin to sound, that the severity of God begins to be sorely felt. As first one trumpet sounds, and then another; the judgments grow severer and severer; till, four having sounded, those judgments which are now to follow are of such a character that God sends an angel to forewarn the trembling earth of them, and, if possible, to avoid them by repentance:—"Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth, by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound."‡ From the beginning to the end of God's "strange work," mercy is mingled with judgment; for, at the intervals between the sounding of the trumpets, space is given for the inhabitants of the earth which shall be living then to repent; just as now God gives us intervals of repentance after the heavy hand of chastisement has been laid upon us. But then, in these last days, of which it may most emphatically be said, "For these be the days of vengeance,"§ the judgments of God will be on such a dreadful scale as the world never before saw. Neither will they be intermitted till all the guilty are punished, till the nations that will not serve God shall have been consumed; while such as "kiss the Son" and acknowledge his benign sway shall be saved, and shall acknowledge the Lord to be King over all the earth.

It would be a great mistake to confound these "days of vengeance" with

* Rev. xxi. 5.

† Virgil.

‡ Rev. viii. 13.
28*

§ Luke xxi. 22.

“there is to be no more sea.”* This is the declaration of God’s word.’ So Virgil, when the last trace of sin shall have disappeared from the earth, (that is, as he thinks, when the son of Pollio shall have fully grown to matured age,) says also, in effect, “There shall be no more sea.” Thus he writes: Then “the sailor shall of himself renounce the sea; nor shall the naval pine barter commodities: all lands shall all things produce.” Isaiah expresses the same idea,—the Roman poet and the Jewish prophet blending their divine strains in one. Isaiah thus describes this peculiar feature in the new or renovated earth:—“But there the glorious Lord will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams; wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby.”†

These prophetic books, or Sibyls, (of which, taking Virgil’s fourth Eclogue as the representative, we have attempted to give some idea,) were mostly in the hands of private persons. Great numbers of them were found in various parts of Greece: they were spread also over Italy, and in the islands of the sea. They were not new books: they had been in existence a long while. Out of these numerous books or prophecies,—consisting of a single prophetic sentence or verse, (for a heathen oracle was usually no more than a single sentence, and this was sometimes the case with a Jewish prophecy,)—a little before the birth of Christ, a heathen author (Greek) made a collection, which was extensively

the judgment of the last day. That day stands alone of itself. These judgments do but prepare the way for that happy age that Virgil sung, and which forms the chief part of Jewish prophecy.

* Rev. xxi. 1.

† Isa. xxxiii. 21.

circulated, and “which operated much to the advantage of Christianity in its earliest times.”* This work, which “predicted the coming of a great king out of Judea, who should in great power and glory reign over the whole world,”† aided greatly in raising a general expectation throughout the West of the appearance of an extraordinary personage at the time of the birth of Christ.

Look at another well-known fact,—the dispersion of the Jews over all the earth at the time of the birth of Christ. It was not till the conquest of the East by Alexander the Great that the Jews came much into contact with the Greeks. When Alexander approached Jerusalem in great anger, purposing to raze it to the ground, Jaddua, the high-priest, went forth to meet him, with all the people, clothed in white, leaving the gates of the city wide open. In the high-priest Alexander said he recognised one who at Dios, in Macedonia, had appeared to him in a dream, and assured him beforehand of the conquest of Asia. From this time the Jews were in great favor with Alexander; and from this period we may begin to date their settlement in Greece, in Asia Minor, and in Rome itself, which was so intimately connected with the coming of Christ and the future propagation and establishment of Christianity in the West.

Before this time the Jews were thickly settled in the East, on the Tigris, in Susiana, over all the Persian empire. After the conquest of the East by Alexander, and the great favor shown them by his successors, they spread, as we have seen, first to Antioch and Alexandria,

* Prid. Con. part ii. In the year B.C. 13.

† Ibid.

and then, through Antiochus the Great, they were induced to settle in Phrygia and Lydia, in Asia Minor.* Two thousand families of Jews left Babylonia and Mesopotamia, at one time, for these provinces of Asia Minor. From thence they passed into the Greek-Asiatic cities of Ionia, Æolia, and the Dorians, and so to the islands of Rhodes, Cos, Samos, and Lesbos, in their vicinity. As they spread, where had they not a Synagogue? Under the Parthenon at Athens we find a Jewish synagogue, and by the side of the great temple of Diana at Ephesus. Full of expectation of the coming of their Messiah, of their Anointed Prince, they spake of him in all the countries where they lived; and it is thought that thus the Jewish prophecies became mixed with the Sibyls, and assisted to make Christ the expectation not of the Jews only, but "The Desire of all nations."†

But the centre of influence was Jerusalem. Here the fire burned, here the flame shot up with a radiance all its own. For nearly, if not quite, eighty years, Anna had now prophesied of Christ; and, with an absolute assurance, Simeon, being filled with the Holy Ghost, constantly declared that he should not die till he had seen the Lord's Christ. Many there were in the Holy City who also lived in the daily expectation of the glorious event. Thus, just before the birth of Christ was the city, the nation, the whole earth, filled with the expectation of the joyful advent of the Son of God.

* Prid. Con. part. ii. A.D. 198.

† Hag. ii. 7. The passage reads as follows:—"And I will shake all nations, and the Desire of all nations shall come; and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts."

Book Twelfth.

DECREE OF CÆSAR AUGUSTUS.

PROEM.

WE have now come to the twelfth and last book of this work; and the curtain is soon to arise upon the greatest display of divine wisdom, love, and power the world ever saw,—the Incarnation of Jehovah. In view of this wonderful event, long before the time of its amazing exhibition, by the mouth of his servant Isaiah, God spake to the Jews in the language of encouragement, and sought to inspire them with confidence and a holy boldness, lest the very greatness of the manifestation should overpower the mind and lead to its rejection by his chosen people. In the very chapter in which is announced the coming of the Son of Man, and of his forerunner, whose voice was to be heard, not in the cities of Judah, (for he preached not in cities,) but in the wilderness, the prophet thus directs the people of Israel to the contemplation of the extraordinary spectacle that was about to be presented to their wondering and (if received) rejoicing eyes:—

“O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into

the high mountain: O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid: say unto the cities of Judah, BEHOLD YOUR GOD!"*

Here is language of the deepest import. None less than "the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, who fainteth not, neither is weary,"† Him who "sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers,"‡—none less than the Omnipotent Jehovah is to appear among men, and to mix as a fellow, as an equal, among his creatures.

In our last chapter we spoke a little of the general expectation of this event ere it occurred. We stated a few facts as hints or suggestions for thought to our readers,—not as an elimination of so extensive and interesting a subject. We recur again to this subject.

Of a fair summer morning, ere the sun shows his disc above the horizon, nay, long before he is seen robed in splendor, he sends his rays upward against the sky,—precursors or heralds of his approach. As the time draws near for him to appear, the saffron sky is dyed with a deeper richness, his rays, as if dipped in many-colored light, and sharp as a spear, dart forth to the right and left, sending out brilliant coruscations, making the heavens blush as a carnation-flower with redness, till at length the glorious luminary, as a bridegroom, radiant with light and joy, comes forth out of his chamber and rejoices as a strong man to run a race. So of Shiloh. Expectation was on tiptoe at his approach. It was raised very high,—precursor of the rising

* Isaiah xl. 9.

† Ibid. 28.

Ibid. 22.

of the Sun of righteousness with healing in his wings,—an antidote for every ill, a cure for every wound, sovereign balm for all the evils of our race and world. God had so ordered it, as we have shown, that all over the earth—that earth so weary with its woes and groaning for deliverance—a general expectation, raised by the breath of love divine, was awakened in nearly every human bosom. In the North and in the South, toward the East and toward the West, on land and sea, on island and continent, on the mountain-top and in the low valley, on desert waste and on ocean's shore, men of all countries, of every tribe and tongue, the high and low, rich and poor, bond and free, all appear to have caught the sound of deliverance, and were prepared to give a hearty welcome to the Prince of Peace, hailing with joy his arrival from the shining spheres above. Hearts felt a deep inward joy, and an indescribable hope animated and lifted as on wings the human soul.

It is not a little curious to observe, in this connection, that some eighty years or more before the birth of Christ, just before the civil war that arose from the quarrel of Sylla and Marius for superiority broke out, (this is the great ground of contention among nations and individuals,) there were various prodigies—as they were regarded—which particularly attracted the notice of the Tuscan sages. Of these there was one which was thought “the most considerable,” and which might truly be regarded as a signal from the skies, which produced the utmost consternation and surprise in all minds. “One day, when the sky was serene and clear, there was heard in it the sound of a trumpet, so loud, so shrill, so mourn-

ful, that it frightened and astonished all the world.”* This, with the other prodigies, the Tuscan sages said, “portended a new race of men, and a renovation of the world.”†

Place by the side of this another fact. At the very time these circumstances were transpiring in Rome and Italy, while the soothsayers, agreeably to their mythology, thought that in the revolutions of ages “the great year” had arrived,—just at this juncture was it that in Judea, in the city of Jerusalem, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher, having lately lost her husband, while yet in early womanhood, set apart her remaining life to fasting and prayer, and to wait for redemption in Israel,—in other words, for the advent of Christ, the Saviour and Renovator of the world.

The renovation of the world did then actually commence; for it may be said to have begun with Anna the prophetess, who was especially raised up by God to prepare the way for it. The sound of the trumpet in that serene and clear sky, and the commencement of Anna’s long vigil, were cotemporaneous events; and the expectations of the Tuscan sages or soothsayers, and the hope of Anna, which was “the hope of Israel,” were the same.

The very year, then, that Marius was driven into exile, while he wandered, forlorn, in Italy, a price set upon his head, while he sought refuge among the ruins of Carthage, at the time that Rome was torn by civil convulsions which ate out its life and destroyed its constitution,‡ while the best blood of Rome was spilled,

* Plut. Life of Sylla.

† Ibid.

‡ Marius inflicted the first deadly blow upon the Roman constitution;

first by Marius, then by Sylla, (both these men glutted themselves with blood; Herod was a mere novice in the art of butchery to them,*)—then that auspicious day began to dawn and its light to break through the darkness. The testimony from heathen sources is not to be regarded as weakening, but as confirming, the testimony of the Jewish Scriptures on this point. God did not confine all illumination to the Jews. The heathens had a maxim that in certain favored ages divination was successful in all its predictions, because the deity afforded pure and perfect signs to proceed by;† and we are not to suppose, because God conferred peculiar favors upon the Jewish nation, that he wholly withdrew divine light from the rest of the world. We know he did not. The great truth, for instance, of the existence of God, which is the foundation of all religion,

for it was through his dissimulation that the agrarian law was passed, by which every Senator was compelled to swear, in the forum, before the people, that “they would confirm whatever the people should decree, and not oppose them in any thing.”‡ From the passage of this law may be dated the change in the “fourth kingdom” from “legs of iron” to “feet part of iron and part of clay.”† Before this, the Roman Republic had been strong “as iron, which breaketh in pieces and sublueth all things;” after this, Rome was partly weak and partly strong for a long while, till at length it fell altogether.

* One would suppose, from the way in which writers usually express themselves in regard to Herod, that he was the most bloodthirsty tyrant that ever existed. This is far from the truth. Take the Roman emperors, from Tiberius to Vespasian, including especially Tiberius Caligula, that monster of cruelty, Claudius, with his wife Messalina, and Nero, and Herod in comparison was a most merciful tyrant. The pulpit often speaks of Herod in this loose way. Where character is concerned, whether of the dead or living, we should speak with the greatest discrimination.

† Plut. Life of Sylla.

* Plut. Life of Marius.

† Dan. ii. 33, 40

is taught as clearly without a written revelation as with it. The peculiarity of the Jewish constitution consists chiefly in this: that it recognises Christ, the promised Seed; and, as the result of this, to them—and to them alone—pertained the covenant of “the adoption.” On these two points—that of Christ, and “the adoption” or resurrection of the dead—all their system was built,—their law, their ritual, their national peculiarities. God, “in the immutability of his counsel,” had ordered that the great salvation, in its most peculiar and sublime form of simple faith in his word, must proceed from the Jews; but, apart from this, the pure light from heaven has ever shone on all men, irrespective of age, clime, or nation. Thus, we find that when God is about to make the most wonderful manifestation of himself to our race, while he places an Anna on her watch-tower, on the hill of Zion, (the hill whence earth’s richest blessings flow,) he announced, by what they considered a “wonderful sign,” to “learned Tuscan soothsayers or sages,” the commencement of a new era of time,—of a happy day to the world. Both had their effect. If Anna’s were the more pure and perfect form of revelation,—as it was,—the other had God in it also. Both existed, as it is reasonable to suppose, and as facts would seem to confirm, to raise the general expectation that then prevailed throughout the whole earth in regard to the coming of Christ Jesus the Lord into the world.

There is another circumstance connected with the general expectation that prevailed at the time of the birth of Christ, that a new age, that a new period in the history of the world, was about to commence,—which was that Judea was to be the focus of light; that from

Judea the new order of things was to proceed. This is stated in the most explicit manner by Suetonius in his *Life of the emperor Vespasian*. He was led to speak of it in connection with the election of Vespasian to the empire, who was at the time of his election by the army in Judea. The words of Suetonius are to this effect,—Suetonius supposing they had their fulfilment in Vespasian:—"A strong opinion had now a long while prevailed through all the East 'that a man from Judea should at that time be master of the world.'"*

On these words of Suetonius we propose to offer some remarks.

This opinion did not pass away at the death of Christ. As he did not effect the deliverance that was *at that time* looked for, it continued to be still held. It had taken too deep root to be easily eradicated. Like leaven, it fermented in men's minds, and kept not only Jews, but Greeks and Romans, for a long while in a state of anxious solicitude and suspense.†

We offer a second remark upon these words of Suetonius.

The opinion was not new: it had "now a long while

* Suet. *Life of Vespasian*, sect. 4. The latter part of the sentence, "that a man, &c," Suetonius probably quotes from an ancient *Sibyl* or prophecy.

† The expectation of a great deliverer, founded on what Tacitus calls the "sacerdotal books," was so general and strong, that when Cæsar Augustus assumed the office of Pontifex Maximus, or High-Priest of Rome, he issued an order calling in the prophetic books. He burned some two thousand of these books. The reason assigned for this step was that they "created great disturbance, and raised many vain hopes and fears in men's minds."‡ It was this very expectation, as Josephus assures us, that led to the final rebellion of the Jews and to the destruction of their city and Temple.

* Prid. Con., part ii. An. 13.

prevailed." How long is not said. It was one of those opinions which cannot well be traced to their source. It had been handed down in the succession of ages from one to another. It belonged to antiquity. Its correspondence, however, to the grand, leading idea of the Jewish Scriptures, shows to those acquainted with those Scriptures whence it came, and in some measure fixes its date. In proportion as other nations became intermixed with the Jews, they insensibly received from them their expectation of a Deliverer, and especially as the time drew near for his appearance. For by what hope was a Jew animated in the land of his exile but that of final restoration to the inheritance of his forefathers?—and by whom was this to be effected in the latter days but by their expected Messiah? A hope, this, which on the part of the Jewish nation is indestructible, and which will surely be verified. Ages of disappointment cannot quench the holy flame: it burns ever, it burns now, in the heart of this wonderful people. It is the same to-day as it was eighteen hundred years ago.

There is yet another point connected with this opinion to which Suetonius refers, that we cannot very well overlook. This "man," this person, whoever he was, that was to come from Judea, was to be "master of the world." How does this tally with the facts in the case when applied to Christ? To this we reply, this part of the prediction will yet be literally fulfilled. The time is *yet* to come when "he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem."* Yet further, God, speaking of Jerusalem, saith,

* Isa. iv. 3.

“Son of man, the place of my throne, and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel forever, and my holy name, shall the house of Israel no more defile; and I will dwell in the midst of them forever.”* Here God will lift up a standard to the nations; and “the nation and kingdom that will not serve him shall perish.” Through seas of blood, “in the day of the great slaughter, when the towers fall,”† “in the day that the Lord with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan, the piercing serpent, even leviathan, that crooked serpent, and shall slay the dragon that is in the sea,”‡—in the day that “the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity,”§ —in the day that “the Lord maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof,”||—in that “time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation to that same time,”¶ will God himself march to the conquest of the nations, and to the full and complete establishment of a visible kingdom on earth, which, while “it shall break in pieces and consume” all opposing kingdoms, shall itself “never be destroyed,” “shall not be left to other people,” but “shall stand forever.”**

Previous to this time, war shall succeed to war, as it always has done; “nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom,” there shall be, also, as in the past, “famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes

* Ezek. xliii. 7, 9. † Isa. xxx. 25. ‡ Isa. xxvii. 1. § Ibid. xxvi. 21.

|| Ibid. xxiv. 1. ¶ Dan. xii. 1. ** Ibid. ii. 44.

in divers places ;” but these are only the precursors of the storm that is to arise, and to shake terribly the whole earth ; they are, so to speak, but “the beginning of sorrows.”* When Christ shall fully set up his kingdom on the earth, when he shall “go forth for the salvation of his people, even for salvation with his anointed,”† when he shall “take to him his great power and shall reign,”‡ then he will “strike through with his staves the head of his villages,” then he will “wound the head out of the house of the wicked, by discovering the foundation unto the neck ;” then he will “march through the land [earth] in indignation, and thresh the heathen in anger ;”§ then, in order to receive “the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession,” God will “break them with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.”||

The final result of this wonderful commotion, this strange disturbance, this “reeling of the earth to and fro like a drunkard, and its removal like a cottage,”¶ this universal consternation, (save on the part of God’s elect,) when he who “fleeth from the noise of the fear shall fall into the pit, and he that cometh up out of the midst of the pit shall be broken in the snare, when the windows from on high are open, and the foundations of the earth do shake,”** when God will “shake not the earth only, but also the heavens,”††—the final result of

* Matt. xxiv. 7, 8. † Hab. iii. 13. ‡ Rev. xi. 17. § Hab. iii. 12, 13, 14.*

|| Ps. ii. 8, 9. ¶ Isa. xxiv. 20. ** Ibid. xxiv. 18. †† Hag. ii. 21.

* The prayer of the prophet Habakkuk for the full establishment of Christ’s kingdom in our earth gives a most vivid picture of the amazing accompaniments of this awful and terrible day of the Lord.

all this, this “shaking the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land,”* will be the fulfilment to the letter of the ancient prophecy mentioned by Suetonius, (mentioned also, nearly in the same words, by Tacitus,) and Jesus will be “the master of the world,” or, as the prophet Zechariah expresses it, “King over all the earth.”†

We again remark, we are not to confound the “overthrow of the throne of kingdoms”‡ with the day of final judgment, any more than we are to confound calamities that are now continually occurring on the earth with the day of the general resurrection and the last judgment. He who destroyed the Canaanites (the cup of their iniquity being filled up) to settle his people in the lot of their inheritance, will, only on a larger scale, “come out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity,” to introduce the reign of righteousness on this our earth, and to fulfil, as he said he would, every “jot and tittle” of his word.

In view of the ultimate reign of righteousness in our earth, when the visible kingdom of Christ will be set up, and his “will shall be done on earth as it is in heaven,” who can wonder at the exalted tone of Jewish prophecy, or at those strains of rapture with which the prophets describe the glorious future of our renovated and paradisaical earth? Seeing, as they did, passing in a vision before their eyes, the inconceivable glory, felicity, and power of Christ’s kingdom on earth, they poured forth the full tide of heaven’s own minstrelsy;

* Hag. ii. 7.

† Zech. xiv. 9.

‡ Hag. ii. 22.

distant nations caught the joyful sound; and hearts palpitated and leaped for joy as the hour approached for the inauguration of a new and divine era in the history of our world. From the birth of Christ was this new period to commence; and Jewish prophecy and heathen oracle conjoined to prepare the minds of the people everywhere to look for those who, to adopt the language of the Roman historian, Tacitus, "should come out of Judea and should obtain the empire of the world."*

Seated on the imperial throne, little did Cæsar Augustus think, when he issued the decree from the Palatium in Rome, for the third time during his reign, that not only Rome, as formerly, but all the provinces, and even the kingdoms that were in any way dependent on Rome, should be taxed, that he was but an humble instrument in the hands of the Former of the earth and skies to bring to pass the divine purpose, and to accomplish that prophecy of Micah (the cotemporary of Isaiah) which designated the very place by name, the holy spot, where the world's Redeemer should be born.† This decree was issued eight years before the vulgar or common era of Christianity,—that is, three years before the actual birth of Christ; and its execution in Judea, Cœle-Syria, Phœnicia, and Syria, was left to Saterninus, Governor of Syria. It took account of property, real and personal, of trades and offices, of every person, young and

* Annals.

† Micah v. 2. "But thou, Bethlehem Ephrata, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."

old, man, woman, and child, throughout the whole Roman empire,—which then constituted the greatest portion of the civilized world. As Judea was an independent kingdom, governed by its own laws and ruled by its own king, it was not intended by Cæsar that any tax should be levied directly upon its people, but the census was extended to the kingdom of Herod to serve as a register of its population and to be used as a statistical table of reference. While Herod lived, and during the reign of his son and successor Archelaus, no tax was ever levied from Judea on the strength of this assessment; but thirteen years afterward, when Cyrenius* was Governor of Syria, this tax was first levied,—Judea having now become a dependent province, like Syria and Egypt, of the Roman empire, and having a Roman governor or procurator.†

For three years the assessors had been engaged in their slow and tedious task before they came to the little village of Bethlehem. Word had gone forth throughout the land that the families of the tribe of Benjamin should assemble at an appointed time in Bethlehem, and present themselves in their own proper persons, for examination and registration of their names, trades, and effects, before the assessors. Thus it was that the decree of Cæsar Augustus, issued eight years before the vulgar Christian era, reached the house of Joseph and Mary (the lineal descendants of the house or family of David) at what would seem an unpropitious time, and brought them from Nazareth, where

* In Latin, Quirinius,—Publius Sulpitius Quirinius; in Greek, Cyrenius.

† Prid. Con. part ii. Year before Christ 5,—where the whole subject is fully treated.

they dwelt, to Bethlehem ; for here was the inheritance, or patrimonial estate, of David the son of Jesse, the son of Obed, the son of Boaz and Ruth ; and here Christ, the Saviour of the world, was to be born.

CHAPTER I.

THE APPEARANCE OF THE ANGEL TO ZACHARIAS IN THE TEMPLE.

LESS than four years before the birth of Christ, the Temple, having been wholly rebuilt by Herod, was dedicated anew to the service of Almighty God.* The Temple *proper*—that is, the part consisting of the Holy Place, and the *Holy of Holies*, or Most Holy Place—was finished within eighteen months from the time its re-erection commenced ; and the Jews, fond of every thing that shows the care of God over their holy house, have a tradition (which is probably true) that during this period it did not rain in the daytime, but rained only in the night, so that the workmen were not at all hindered. In nine years and a half the whole was completed,—courts and porticos and temple,—at least, so that it could be dedicated at the time above specified.

* Lucius, grandson of Augustus, (second son of Agrippa and Julia,) was born the same year Herod began to rebuild the Temple. Horace died the year in which it was dedicated,—as did also Mæcenas, the munificent patron of literature in the Augustan age.

Still there remained a vast amount of ornamental and other work to be done; so that for years afterward many thousands of "laborers and artificers" continued to be employed on it, even down to the time of our Saviour.*

We have no reason to think very highly of the motives which induced Herod to rebuild the Temple. Personal popularity was with him more of an object than the glory of God. Having done so much to gain a great name among the nations that were aliens to the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenant of promise,—having, in a spirit of compliance with Greeks and Romans, departed so far from the faith of his fathers and made such inroads upon the Mosaic constitution,—veering round, he suddenly hit upon the plan of rebuilding the Temple, (now much defaced by long use,) partly to obviate discontent, partly to add to the magnificence of Jerusalem. But, apart from the motive, the great undertaking was begun and accomplished, and with such lavish expense and in such a style of art as made the Jewish Temple the wonder of the world.

The Temple, in its new form, in the splendor, costliness, and fine finish of its workmanship and of all appertaining to it, vied now with the magnificence of the rest of the Holy City. All through Herod's long and prosperous reign he had been engaged adorning the capital of his kingdom; and its numerous high towers, strong bulwarks, costly edifices, and sumptuous palaces

* Herod commenced erecting the new Temple (he had spent two years in making his preparations) "just forty-six years before the first Passover of Christ's personal ministry."*

* Prid. Con. before Christ An. 17.

showed that love of display and munificent^e spirit for which he was so distinguished. Not to speak of the Towers of Hippicus, of Phasaelus, and of Mariamne, the new palace of Herod, in the immediate vicinity of these costly and handsome towers, at the northwest point of Zion's Hill, was one of the most superb buildings. Josephus acknowledges his inability to describe it. There was no end to the number of the rooms. Many were of great size; while the furniture was of the richest kind. The greater part of the vessels that were put in these rooms was of silver and gold. The ceilings were very high and richly ornamented; the floors were of the mosaic order, the stones of which they were composed being the finest and rarest that could be collected. There were numerous porticos, or covered walks, in the form of open courts: these porticos were sustained and adorned by pillars of the finest marble. One could pass from one portico to another, threading the spacious building from point to point and coming out into these porticos, or open courts, with the open sky over your head and the green grass under your feet. There were also groves of trees, and shady walks, and fountains that emitted their water through brazen statues. The palace itself was surrounded with a wall thirty-five feet in height, of proportionable thickness and strengthened and adorned with towers at equal distances. Herod took the palace of the Maccabees (now changed into a fortress and called *Antonia*, after Mark Antony) as his model; but he had greatly improved upon this ancestral home of the Asamonean princes.*

* Joseph. Jewish War, book v. chap. 4, sect. 4.

And now the Temple vied with, if it did not outshine, all the rest. The great blocks of fine white marble of which the Temple was built were joined or united together with such skill that the seam could not be seen, but, like the Towers of Hippicus and Mariamne, the building appeared as if it might have been cut into its present shape out of one solid block of marble. At a distance, we are told, to those approaching the city from the country it resembled a mountain of snow. What shall we say of the vine that encircled the pillars of the lofty porch in front of the Temple, with its graceful folds, the huge stem of solid gold, and the clusters of grapes, which were of the size of a man,—of gold also? Heavy plates of gold covered the whole front or face of the Temple, so that when the sun arose, and his broad beams flashed upon it, the fiery splendor could not be borne by the eye. The wide porticos or cloisters around the entire Court of the Gentiles,—what of them? The marble pillars, the high ceilings, made of cedar-wood and elaborately carved? What of the gates, set as a jewel, with precious stones, of the variegated marble pavement of the various courts, of the elegant low wall, made of stone, which encompassed the sanctuary, beyond which no stranger must pass? What of the gate of Corinthian brass, which glittered with a lustre superior to that of silver or gold? What, in fine, of the endless adornments and finish of the new Temple? As it rose in its costly beauty, as if the wealth of imperial Rome, rather than that of the comparatively small

* This wall was four feet and a half high. Upon it stood pillars, on which was written, in Greek and Latin, "*No foreigner should go into that sanctuary.*"

kingdom of Judea, were lavished upon it, (no doubt, in the course of its erection, Herod received large contributions from Jews in every part of the world,) it recalled the memory of the glory of the first Temple; for hardly inferior to Solomon's appear to have been the resources of King Herod.

But was Herod joyful amid all this splendor? A cloud thick and heavy as darkest night rested upon him and his house. At the point we have now reached in our history, driven to and fro and nearly distracted by the contending passions of fear and jealousy, he had, as we have already narrated to the reader, slain two of his sons, Alexander and Aristobulus, the children of Mariamne. It was not enough to imbrue his hands in the blood of the mother; he must also in that of her sons. At this very time he knew not where to look for comfort, nor in whom to trust. There was Antipater, 'tis true; but did not his heart, so perturbed, at times mistrust him? He was old also now, and the glory of the world was departing. What had he gained? Was his heart at rest? Had he a friend? Thus was circumstanced King Herod, when God, by angelic ministration, began to open anew, and in a way more striking even than of old, the intercourse between heaven and earth.

At a time when expectation was at its height,—when not only in Judea, but over all the earth, the prophecies that had gone before had led men to look for a great change in the condition of the world, and the appearance out of the land of Israel of an extraordinary person,—Zacharias, of whom we have before spoken, went

up from his residence in Hebron, one of the cities of the Levites, to officiate in the Temple, in the order of his course or *class*. His class, the name of which was Abia, (or Abijah,) after one of the chief men of the two families of Eleazer and Ithamar, the two surviving sons of Aaron, (from whom the whole body of the priests were descended,) was the eighth of the original twenty-four courses of priests as they were arranged by David. This arrangement had been kept up after the Captivity, so that, though in fact but four of the original twenty-four classes actually returned from Babylon to Palestine, yet, each of the four having been subdivided into six classes, the former number, and the name by which each class was designated, were retained. Thus, Zacharias belonged to the class which, from the time of David, had been denominated by the name of its first leader, Abia, or Abijah.

The number of priests was large,—each class consisting of over a thousand. When their term of service arrived,—each class serving but twice a year,—they came up from the various Levitical cities, where they severally resided, to Jerusalem. We know not how many beside Zacharias lived in Hebron, a city in the southern part of the tribe of Judah: if there were other families of priests residing there,—as was probably the case,—they doubtless came in company, travelling by easy stages, but so as to be ready to enter on their term of service on the Jewish Sabbath. For a single Sabbath the two classes would mingle together,—the one retiring from their official duties as the others took their places. There would be a happy reunion, joyful greetings among men set apart to the highest and holiest office on earth.

Among this crowd of priests, mingling with the throng, would be seen the venerable patriarch—the aged priest—as well as those in their early prime or in the full meridian of their days. But they all had one and the same work, and were set apart from the womb to the same heavenly calling.

Each day the duty of the priests was assigned to them by lot; in the early morning they assembled for this purpose, and then each one knew for that day the duty he was to perform. There was no strife among them on this point, for there was no preference: the appointment by lot ruled out all thought of partiality, and each accepted with thankfulness his proper service. In the course of the week to which we now refer, when the class of Abia was in attendance at the Temple, one day it fell to the lot of Zacharias to burn incense. This was to take place at three o'clock in the afternoon, the time of evening prayer. A great crowd had assembled—both of men and women—in the Court of the Women, for divine worship. The court, large as it was, was filled,—the women in the galleries above, the men on the floor below.

Zacharias, with the incense, entered the holy place; and as he entered the Temple, forbidden to all but the priesthood, he disappeared from view. Usually the service was short, and in a little while the priest made his appearance again, with the censer in his hand, in the presence of all the people. But this time the stay was long, much longer than usual, and various thoughts began to agitate the multitude. The silence that prevailed was deep and solemn, and among both priests and people the inquiry arose,—not expressed in words,

but by looks,—what did the long delay of the aged and venerable priest portend? At length Zacharias made his appearance; but there was a change in him. He had lost his voice, he could not speak, and in dumb show—by signs—he dismissed the people. Though nothing was said, though Zacharias does not appear at this time to have given any explanation of his detention, yet the people were fully satisfied God had manifested himself to his servant in some remarkable manner. As the anxious crowd left the Temple, passing out of the various gates according to the quarter of the city in which they lived, many were the questions propounded; but, without a doubt, the universal impression was that God had at length once more visited his chosen people, and was now about to raise up a horn of salvation in the house of his servant David. Leaving the people to their speculations, we return to Zacharias.

When Zacharias entered the holy place, having passed the golden-plated doors, he saw, standing on the right side of the altar of incense, (which altar was directly over against him as he entered, close to the veil of the Temple,) an angel of the Lord. The sight of the angel filled him with fear; he was troubled at his appearance; but the angel hastened to assure him and to remove his fear. He at once told him his errand, which was that his prayer was heard, and that he should have a son. The name of the son was given, and the special work to which he was called of God. His great mission was to precede the Lord, the Messiah, the Anointed Prince. He was to be his herald, his forerunner, his precursor. In him the spirit of one of Israel's most favored prophets was to be revived; and God would honor him in a

most eminent manner. He should be "great in the sight of the Lord." Sanctified from the womb, endued with divine illumination in an extraordinary measure, taught the true meaning of each sacrificial type, made conscious that the blood of bulls and goats did but pre-signify a vicarious sacrifice of infinite value,—sent forth not only as the herald of Christ, but as a preacher of righteousness, the wonderful power of God would rest upon him, and "many of the children of Israel shall he turn" from the ways of sin and folly, of darkness and unbelief, "to the Lord their God."

Zacharias, taken by surprise, amazed, and perhaps somewhat lost and bewildered, being also an old man, and having long since relinquished the expectation of a son, appears to have hesitated or wavered in his mind as to what degree of credit to attach to so unusual a communication, and then to have asked of the angel a sign in confirmation of his words. He ought to have believed, at once and without a sign, the angel's words; especially instructed as he had been in the ways of the Lord, not a shade of doubt should have crossed his mind. He should, like Abraham, have been "strong in faith, giving glory to God." "Whereby shall I know this?" asked Zacharias of the angel of the Lord; "for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years."* The angel then told him that he was Gabriel, that he stood in the presence of God, and that he had been expressly sent to make known to him the birth of a son. As a punishment in part for his unbelief, but also as a sign from heaven, he should from that instant lose his speech and remain dumb until the birth of his son. So ended

* Luke i. 18.

this interview. God had, under the old Jewish administration, frequently spoken to man by the ministration of angels, and all they had said had been "steadfast," had been found to be true. It now remained to be seen whether any change in this respect had taken place, and whether this word now spoken by an angel, announcing the opening of Messiah's reign, would be confirmed by the event. Gabriel, who now speaks to Zacharias' a priest of the most high God, had spoken, between five and six hundred years before, to Daniel, on the banks of the Ulai, in Susiana, (this river falls into the Persian Gulf, not far from the Tigris,) and had foretold the conquest of Asia by the Macedonians under Alexander the Great, in terms so plain that they were free from all obscurity: he now comes to announce the first beginning of a greater empire, of an everlasting kingdom, a kingdom that is never to pass away. The word of Gabriel did not fail in the former case; it has passed into history; it forms an important page in the annals of our race. Will it fail now, when God himself is about to make his appearance on the earth?

At the close of the week, Zacharias returned home. Did he ever return home with feelings so joyful before? His was not a selfish joy,—it was not exclusively centred in the birth of a son in his old age,—joyful an event as this was; but he looked forward to the redemption of Israel and to the fulfilment of all those inexpressibly glorious promises spoken by the mouth of the prophets since the world began. The birth of this son was the pledge of the redemption of Israel and the universal establishment of Christ's kingdom on the earth.

CHAPTER II.

ANTIPATER CONSPIRES AGAINST HIS FATHER.

WHILE God was thus opening the intercourse direct between himself and his creatures, by the ministry of an angel, as in the ancient days, (not that he had at any time wholly ceased to make himself known to his people through his servants,—those that feared him,) very different scenes were transpiring in the palace of Herod. His eldest son, Antipater,—now that his half-brothers, Alexander and Aristobulus, were dead,—could not rest till he had made way with his aged father. Though he at this time governed the nation jointly with his father, and his word was all-powerful whether for or against any one, yet, fearing lest in some way his wicked deeds should be discovered and he punished, at the same time entertaining a most cordial hatred to his father, and anxious to have the whole power in his own hands,—all his thought was how he should effect his death.

At this time Pheroras became exceedingly embittered against Herod; and Antipater, seizing his opportunity, induced him to join in the plan he had formed of murdering his father. Others were also admitted into the secret,—Pheroras' wife, with her sister and mother, also Doris, the mother of Antipater. With her son, she appears to have cherished a deadly antipathy to Herod, while, like Antipater, in his presence she was all smiles

and blandishments. There were other agents also, but these were the chief. They often met together and had secret conferences, but were very careful that these clandestine interviews should not be known. Salome, however, suspected that all was not right, and communicated her fears to Herod; but what she said did not make much impression on him. He knew her vindictive nature, and how she had calumniated Mariamne,—what a malicious and slanderous tongue she had,—and did not know how far to trust her or to believe the story she told.

The plot went on. To impose on Herod, the women, in the company of others, or if Herod were present, would abuse one another as if they were bitter enemies; but this was only a mask or screen: when together, they were the best of friends. It was concluded to take off the king by poison; and, for this purpose, Antiphalus, a friend of Antipater, who had a brother a physician in that city, went and obtained it from thence. Antiphalus delivered the poison to Theudion, (brother of Doris, Herod's wife,) who sent it by a trusty agent to Pheroras. At this stage of the proceedings, Antipater, so as not to be suspected of any share in the deed,—with the permission of his father,—went to Rome, having, through his friends, led Augustus to invite him. In so many folds or coils did this man wrap himself in order to hide his crimes and evade detection. He did not think that there was one eye that saw through his manifold disguises, and that a hand was stretched out that at any moment could rend the veil and bring all his iniquities to light.

Not long after the departure of Antipater for Rome, Pheroras was taken sick. Herod visited him in his

sickness, and showed so much brotherly kindness that the heart of Pheroras failed. Growing worse, he told his wife to burn the poison, expressing the deepest regret that he had engaged in so wicked an enterprise against a brother that had always shown him the greatest love. Soon after he died. His death brought to light the guilt of Antipater. Two freedmen of Pheroras suspected that he had been poisoned by his wife, and complained to Herod. Upon examination by torture of some women that belonged to the household of Pheroras, one of the women alluded to Antipater's mother as the cause of their present distress. And now there came out, link by link, a long chain of circumstances, all tending to implicate Antipater and to show how, with Pheroras, he had planned his father's death. Pheroras' wife, herself, confessed the plot, and showed who were privy to it; and among the rest, Doris, his own wife, and Antipater's mother.

What a blow must this discovery have been to the aged and unhappy king! Two of his sons, children of the lamented Mariamne, he had slain, chiefly at the instance of Antipater, who accused them of conspiring against his life; and now this very son, together with his mother, upon whom he had lavished such rich gifts and so many favors, were both engaged in a similar conspiracy! When these facts came to light, Herod sent for Antipater to return home. When he landed at Cæsarea, an ominous silence prevailed. He had left amid the acclamations of crowds and the congratulations of friends; but now no one spoke, no one came to bid him welcome. As soon as it was thought that his own life would be the just forfeit of his crimes, the hate the

multitude felt toward him was shown by the manner of his reception. He had come too far to retreat. He was fairly caught in the lion's den. He had received no warning: a letter from his mother informing him that all was discovered, and advising him on no account to return, was found on the person of one of her slaves who was stopped on the way; for every avenue and outlet of the country was strictly watched, lest word should be sent to Antipater. After a full and fair trial before Quintilius Varus, Procurator or Governor of Syria, he was found guilty, condemned to death, and cast into prison. While he was in prison, and his fate remained in suspense till the sentence was approved by Augustus, (for Herod would not act without his consent,) and while Herod was wading through this new and unexpected scene of domestic suffering, occurred the extraordinary scene in the land of Judea which we shall now proceed to detail.

CHAPTER III.

THE APPEARANCE OF THE ANGEL TO MARY.

AT this time the gates of the Temple of Janus were closed. This was the third time in the reign of Augustus. The first we have mentioned, which was after the battle of Actium; the second time was at the close of the war with the Cantabrians in Spain, which was four years after the former. And now there was peace again,—universal peace,—peace over the whole Roman empire.

The civil wars which from the time of Sylla and Marius had convulsed the nation had for some time ceased; and Rome and its provinces, under the gentle and peaceful sway of Augustus, had a short season of rest from the din and clangor of war. Little else than the sound of war had been heard in Rome since the city was founded; it had been nearly all war for the long space of seven hundred and fifty years. But now in this city of Mars the Temple of Janus is closed, and the earth may breathe a little. It has drunk the cup of fury—even the cup of trembling—to the very dregs; and may there not at length be peace? Or was man only made for war, and to imbrue his hands in his brother's blood? Is this his legitimate occupation? Is the page of time only to exhibit nations in arms against each other, and not mankind dwelling together in peace? Are men, as wild beasts, just made to fight, to tear, to devour each other? Or may there yet be peace on earth, and good will among men? Will wars yet cease unto the end of the earth?

In the village of Nazareth, in Galilee, there lived at this time a young woman of the name of Mary. She was of the daughters of Aaron, and was espoused to Joseph, of the house of David. We have already spoken of the family of Joseph. We refer the reader to what is there said.* We have now to speak of his espoused wife, the Virgin Mary. The first promise God made to man after the fall was that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. One made of a woman, of woman born, was to bruise "that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth

* See Book IV. chap. iii. p. 87, of this work.

the whole world.”* The famous exploits of Hercules, had they not their origin in this first promise?† Hercules was destined before his birth to be a great conqueror, to war against monsters that none but one armed with the power of the gods could overcome. In his youth, ranging himself on the side of virtue,‡ and in quest of immortality, he set out on his benevolent mission,—stopping not until he had achieved all he had undertaken, and descended even to the regions of the dead. It was in the dark domain of Pluto that Hercules closed his victorious career.§ Thus, in the true oracles of God, one descended from the skies was to bruise the serpent’s head,—to wage war with all that was evil, to conquer death, and to bring in an age of universal righteousness.

This descendant of Adam—this emphatically “Son of man”—was to be born of a virgin. In process of time a virgin was to conceive and bear a son, whose name should be Immanuel.||

The circumstances under which this prophecy was given are worthy our attention. Syria and Israel had combined against Judah; and we read that the news of the existence of this powerful confederacy against it moved Jerusalem, “as the trees of the wood are moved

* Rev. xii. 9, in connection with Gen. iii. 15.

† See the account of the twelve exploits of Hercules.

‡ The story of Hercules’ choice of virtue is beautifully told by Xenophon, in his *Life of Socrates*. It is introduced in a conversation Socrates held with Aristippus on temperance.

§ It is a little curious that in the great fight Hercules had with the Lernaean Hydra, while engaged in fierce contest with the horrible monster, whose heads grew as fast as they were cut off, Juno sent a crab to gnaw at the heels of Hercules. The very words of the original prophecy seem to have been partially retained under the weird guise of the Greek fable.

|| Isa. vii. 14. The Septuagint reads “Emmanuel.”

by the wind.”* It was the intention of the confederate kings to dethrone Ahaz, the reigning monarch, a descendant of the house of David, and to substitute “the son of Tabeal”† as king. Isaiah, who lived at this time, was sent to encourage Ahaz, and to assure him that their design should not succeed. “It shall not stand,” said the Lord, by the mouth of his servant Isaiah, “neither shall it come to pass.”‡ In confirmation of this declaration, which was but a renewal of God’s ancient promise to David that his house should never fail,§ two signs were given. One was that the prophet should have a son, “and that before that son should be of age to discern between good and evil,” Rezin, King of Syria, and Pekah, King of Judah, should both be cut off from the land: which predictions came to pass accordingly, one in three years from this time, the other the next year after.||

The next sign that was given in proof of the perpetuity of the house of David, and that of course the present confederacy would fail, was to this effect:—“BEHOLD, A VIRGIN SHALL CONCEIVE, AND BEAR A SON, AND SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL.”

There can hardly be a doubt that when the prophet Isaiah was directed to give this additional sign to Ahaz, King of Judah, he understood its deep import. He saw through it the glory of Christ rising and spreading over all the earth.¶

* Isa. vii. 2.

† Ibid. vii. 6.

‡ Ibid. vii. 7.

§ 2 Sam. vii. 12–16, where God expressly assures David that his “throne shall be established forever.”

|| Prid. Con. part i. in the year before Christ 742.

¶ We know to an absolute certainty that David foresaw this, and knew in what sense his posterity should never fail to occupy his throne. David

This prophecy was now to be fulfilled. When it was first uttered, Rome was in its infancy; Romulus was its king: now, at the time of the fulfilment of the prophecy,—at least that part of it relating to the actual birth of the wonderful child,—Rome is mistress of the world. While this great state had proceeded from conquest to conquest, God might be thought to have slumbered, and to have forgotten his promise. He did but wait till the full time had arrived. When this time came, long since fixed in the counsel of God, even from eternity itself, he sent an angel to announce it, as we have seen.

The message of the angel was to this effect. Mary was informed that she was about “to conceive and bear a son; that his name was to be called JESUS; that he would be great, and would be called the Son of the Highest; that the Lord God would give unto him the throne of his father David; that he should reign over the house of Jacob forever; and that of his kingdom there should be no end.”*

Thus spake the angel. Looking beyond the period of this infant’s birth and first existence on our earth,—beyond the scene of his sufferings and death,—he fixed his steady gaze on the bright future. He, as well as the prophet David, contemplated the hour when this infant, “this rod out of the stem of Jesse, this branch that should grow out of his roots,”† should be “raised up”

“being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his loins according to the flesh he would raise up Christ [from the dead] to sit on his throne,”* saw distinctly the future glory of Christ’s kingdom in the latter days: so also, no doubt, did Isaiah.

* Luke i. 31–33.

† Isa. xi. 1

from the dead,* to sit on “THE THRONE OF HIS FATHER DAVID.”† This was the utterance of the angel: He was also to reign over THE HOUSE OF JACOB FOREVER. So explicit and unmistakable was the language of the angelic messenger, of Gabriel, who stands in the presence of the Most High God.

The same view had the holy prophet Isaiah. He describes the Son who was to be born of a virgin in words similar in substance to those of the angel Gabriel.

This is the description of the prophet:—“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with justice and judgment from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this.”‡

The angel said to Mary, “He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest.” What does Isaiah say? “His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.” The angel said that this infant

* Acts ii. 30.

† Let the reader carefully compare the words of Peter in his discourse on the day of Pentecost with the words of the angel.

‡ Isa. ix. 6, 7. The words “son” and “child” mean precisely one and the same thing; that is, an infant, a child recently born. (Ges. Lex.) This forms part of the same general prophecy. From the 7th chapter of Isaiah to the 12th inclusive, should be read in close and careful connection. One part of the extended prophecy elucidates the other; and all together bring out in full lustre the picture of the Virgin Mary’s son, Immanuel, God with us, and of his future kingdom.

son, the child of the Virgin Mary, should possess the throne of his father David; while of his kingdom there should be no end. What does Isaiah say? He says, "The government shall be upon his shoulder; and of the enlargement* of his empire† and peace there shall be no end; upon the throne of David [so it may be paraphrased, not in the least departing from the sense of the passage] shall he be seated, ruling his empire with justice and judgment from henceforth even forever."

Next the angel proceeds to unfold the manner of the conception, and also to inform the Virgin Mary that her cousin Elizabeth was about to bring forth a son in her old age. At the close of the interview, Mary said, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord: be it unto me according to thy word."

CHAPTER IV.

VISIT OF MARY TO HER COUSIN ELIZABETH.

It appears that immediately after the departure of the angel, Mary set out upon a visit to her cousin Elizabeth. This visit was of God: she did not set out in her own strength: on the contrary, it is highly probable that the long journey was undertaken by direction of the angel. What had taken place six months previous,—the appearance of the angel to Zacharias, and the an-

* See Gen. Lex.

† Ibid.

nouncement to him of the birth of a son, and the present situation of Elizabeth,—Mary now heard for the first time. Filled with joy and expectation, she hastened to Hebron,* the city in the hill-country of Judah where Zacharias and Elizabeth resided. A little before the traveller reaches Hebron, he enters the vale of Eshcol,† this celebrated vale forming a lovely approach from the north to the ancient city.

This was a remarkable journey to the Virgin Mary. What was uppermost in her mind is very easy to tell. Nothing is clearer than that God had sworn with an oath to David that “of the fruit of his body will he set upon his throne;”‡ and there can be no doubt that by the seed of David, “the fruit of his body,” is meant Christ.§ This, David, “being a prophet,” knew; and he also knew that he spake not of himself, but of Christ, when he said, “Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine holy one to see corruption.”|| He also indubitably knew that Christ would be “raised up” from the dead to sit on his throne; and then, after his victory and triumph over death, he would, so to speak, “ask” of God “the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession.”¶

This was the promise to David and his seed. In other words, the Jewish Messiah, the Lord’s Anointed, the Hope of Israel, and indeed the expectation of the whole world, was to be of the seed of David. In the

* Hebron was anciently one of the cities of refuge. It was one of the forty-eight cities allowed to the tribe of Levi, of which thirteen were contained in the three tribes of Benjamin, Judah, and Simeon.

† The meaning of “Eshcol” is “bunch of grapes.” ‡ Ps. cxxxii. 11.

§ Acts ii. 30.

|| Ps. xvi. 10.

¶ Ps. ii. 8.

strongest and clearest manner is this made known in the following passages from a Psalm which, from the exalted character of the language, can relate to none other than the Messiah. It makes the heart burn to read it, and fills the mind with the full assurance of hope for the entire renovation of our world. "I have made a covenant with my chosen; I have sworn unto David, my servant, Thy seed will I establish forever, and build up thy throne to all generations."

Again, from the same Psalm:—"I have found David, my servant; with my holy oil have I anointed him. I will set his hand also in the sea, and his right hand in the rivers. Also will I make him my first-born, [that is, the "first-begotten of the dead,"] higher than the kings of the earth," (that is, "Prince of the kings of the earth.")

Yet again, from the same Psalm:—"Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure forever, and his *throne* as the sun before me. It shall be established forever, as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven."*

Such was the language of inspiration in respect to the seed of David,—in other words, to the promised Messiah. In this connection and relation they were understood by the Virgin Mary. The Holy Spirit, under whose influence these words of David were penned, had been given to Mary, and she knew, from the declaration of the angel, and by comparing scripture with scripture, that the child which was already "conceived in her

* See the whole of the 89th Psalm, which is full of Christ, his power, truth, salvation, and future kingdom and glory. The holy penman knows not how sufficiently to magnify the name of God for the great gift of his Anointed. All the expressions in this Psalm extolling the greatness and power of God are framed upon this idea.

womb" by the Holy Ghost was to be the promised seed of David, the Anointed Prince of Israel. This was what arose in her mind on her way to Hebron; and she was sure that in this promised seed, this fulfilment of God's oath to David, and, agreeably to his word to Abraham and to his seed, "ALL THE FAMILIES OF THE WORLD WOULD BE BLESSED."

She may have been mistaken in regard to *the time* when this kingdom was to be set up, but not as it respected *the kingdom itself*. She probably thought, along with nearly every one else, that it would be established then. Her son was to be the promised seed of David; he was to sit on the throne of his father David and to rule the house of Jacob forever. She concluded (because she did not understand that he must be "raised up" from the dead to "sit on his throne") that he would not die, but that, agreeably to the general opinion of her nation, he would "abide forever."* Neither did Mary, at this time, understand the true character of the Messiah as God. She understood Christ to be the "Son of the blessed," but not "the Blessed One," "God over all, blessed for evermore." She was not as yet prepared to understand this amazing exhibition of God's love to man; nor would she be until after the resurrection of Christ and the gift of the Holy Ghost.

* This opinion was founded on Scripture. When Christ spoke of his death, "the people answered him, We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth forever."* Well might they say so, in view of such passages as the following:—"His seed shall endure *forever*."† "Thou art a priest *forever*, after the order of Melchizedek."‡ "Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be *no end*;"§ but all is reconciled when we find that in order for Christ to be "Prince of the kings of the earth," he must be "the First-Begotten of the Dead."||

* John xii. 34. † Ps. lxxxix. 36. ‡ Ps. cx. 4. § Isa. ix. 7. || Rev. i. 5.

CHAPTER V.

THE ANGEL OF THE LORD APPEARS TO JOSEPH IN
A DREAM.

IN a former chapter, under the caption of "The Descendants of Zerubbabel," we have spoken of the declension of the family of David. In the third chapter of the first book of Chronicles the pedigree of the family is brought down to the time of Alexander the Great. It gradually sank into obscurity, though the record of its successive heads was carefully preserved in the archives of the nation. This is not the place to discuss the genealogy of the house of David: we have, however, what is all-authoritative on this point,—the declaration of the angel of the Lord, who appeared to Joseph in a dream and addressed him as "Joseph, the son of David." This puts the seal of God, the testimony of Heaven, upon his descent.

On the return of Mary from Hebron to Nazareth, after an absence of three months, "when she was found with child of the Holy Ghost," we read "that Joseph, her husband," (a betrothal, among the Jews, is regarded in as sacred a light as marriage itself,) "being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily." A divine communication, however, speedily altered this determination. An angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, (he knew the dream

to be of God,) and bade him “not fear to take unto him Mary his wife, for that which was conceived in her was of the Holy Ghost.” Without demur, Joseph, as soon as he awoke, took the necessary steps, and was married to Mary, in conformity with the mandate he had received from heaven. The sacred penman informs us that all this was done to fulfil the word of the Lord by the mouth of the prophet:—“Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which, being interpreted, is, God with us.”*

This determines conclusively the interpretation of the second sign given to Ahaz, king of Judah, through Isaiah. That God attached a great and mysterious significance to this, is evident from the language used on the occasion. God was about to go out of his way to give a sign. He had often manifested his power to his people in a signal manner; but he was now about to “show strength with his arm”† in a hitherto unheard-of way. “Ask thou a sign of the Lord thy God,” said the prophet Isaiah to Ahaz the king; “ask it either in the depth, or in the height above.”‡ As if he had said, “Is there any limit to my power? Is there any thing I cannot do?”

This plan, which embraced the appearance on earth of an infant child, a son born of a virgin, was God’s plan. It was archetypal with God, as was the creation of the world and the formation of angels and of men. God took counsel with none; he called none to his assistance. In reference to this stupendous exhibition of power and mercy, the prophet Isaiah thus speaks:—“Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or, being

* Matt. i. 18-25.

† Mary’s Song, Luke i. 51.

‡ Isa. vii. 11.

his counsellor, hath taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and showed to him the way of understanding?"

When David, in the eighty-ninth Psalm, speaks of this wonderful conception and birth, he is at a loss for language sufficiently to extol the power and magnify the name of God. Speaking of the covenant of God with David, of his oath to him and his seed, "the fruit of his body," he breaks forth in such fervid expressions as these:—"The heavens shall praise thy wonders, O Lord: thy faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints. For who in the heaven can be compared unto the Lord? who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the Lord? O Lord God of hosts, who is a strong Lord like unto thee, or to thy faithfulness round about thee? Thou rulest the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them. Thou hast broken Rahab [Egypt] in pieces, as one that is slain; thou hast scattered thine enemies with thy strong arm. The heavens are thine, the earth also is thine; as for the world and the fulness thereof, thou hast founded them. Thou hast a mighty arm: strong is thy hand, and high is thy right hand."

These are some of the expressions in a Psalm of David, in which, under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, he thrice speaks of God's covenant with himself and his seed,—God, over and over again, in so brief a space, reiterating the assurance that "he will not break his covenant with him, nor alter the thing that is gone out of his lips." This covenant referred to the virgin's infant son; in view of whose miraculous conception and birth, "Mercy

was to be built up forever ; the faithfulness of God to be established in the very heavens."* The birth of Jesus, by the Virgin Mary, was to be an amazing display and an entirely new exhibition of the mighty power of God. Hence Gabriel said to Mary, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee : therefore also that Holy One that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."† So also the angel of the Lord said to Joseph, "Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife ; for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost."‡

CHAPTER VI.

THE NATIVITY. §

EARTH'S joyful morning has come at last. "Break forth into singing, O mountains, and be joyful, O earth,"|| for thy King is about to visit thee to-day. This visit has been long promised ; hope deferred has nearly made thee heart-sick, and thou hast been ready to faint with the burden thou hadst to bear ; but at length thy

* See the 89th Psalm.

† Luke i. 35.

‡ Matt. i. 20.

§ We omit the account of the birth and circumcision of John the Baptist, reserving it for a work which is to be the sequel of this.

|| Isa. xlix. 13.

redemption is at hand. Thy hills will henceforth be green with perpetual verdure, and thy limpid streams will no more be stained with blood. Thy soil has been wet with tears long enough; thy sighs have long enough mingled with every passing breeze. Tossed as a vessel on the heaving billow hast thou been; but thou wilt now settle down to rest. Man, hitherto worse than lion, or wild boar, or savage tigress,* will no more devour his fellow, and hands that should be extended in love will no more be crossed in hate. We do not say this day is to come at once, at the instant of the birth of Immanuel, or for many long revolving centuries thereafter; but come it surely will: for as the Nile, slowly rising, deposits its rich sediment over the entire valley through which it flows, producing a fertility which made Egypt the granary of the old world, so, sooner or later, the earth will feel the footsteps of her King and will everywhere revive under the soft and gentle pressure.

Let us station ourselves on the brow of Bethlehem's hill. From various parts of the land the Bethlehemites are arriving in their native town, or, at least, the town of their forefathers. Their names are registered as

* Juvenal, Sat. XV. We quote his language at length:—

“The cruel leopard spares the spotted kind;
 No lion spills a weaker lion's gore;
 No boar expires beneath a stronger boar;
 In leagues of friendship, tigers roam the plain,
 And bears with bears perpetual peace maintain.
 While man, alas! flesh'd in the dreadful trade,
 Forges without remorse the murderous blade
 On that dire anvil where primeval skill,
 As yet untaught a brother's blood to spill,
 Wrought only what meek nature would allow,
 Goads for the ox, and coulters for the plough!”

—Gifford's Translation.

citizens of this district, though they may have emigrated elsewhere. It is necessary that they should be here at a certain time; for the decree of Cæsar Augustus called all those whose patrimonial estates (and the law of Moses made every Jew's paternal estate inalienable: this was a very remarkable feature in the Mosaic institution) were within the limits of this town to attend in person, and have their names and property, with their trade or occupation, duly recorded by assessors appointed for the purpose by the Governor of Syria. In consequence of this order, which was rigorously enforced, Bethlehem at this time was very much crowded, and the usually quiet village presented a scene of unwonted interest. Many reunions doubtless took place on this occasion, and many met perhaps who had been long parted. Ah, what friendships are severed, what ties are broken, in consequence of the separations occurring so frequently among those who once thought they could hardly allow a day to pass without seeing each other and mutually unbosoming every thought and feeling of the heart! The heart ever turns to its native spot, and to scenes painted in life's early morning with hues that never fade.

Among the crowd come two young persons. The bloom of youth is on the cheek of each. On a mule or camel the young woman rides at a slow pace, while her husband leads the animal or walks by its side. They are late; they are among the latest comers. Perhaps the last rays of sunlight are tinging the landscape as they enter the ancient village, the scene of David's youth and of Ruth's love. When they reach the inn, it is already full, and they have to occupy that part of it

which is usually appropriated to horses and cattle.* Here a place is hastily made ready for them, and they prepare to lodge in it for the night. Could one have but seen the face of that young woman, perhaps it would have been thought of too divine a cast for earth. What angelic sweetness must have been there portrayed! how soft and gentle the expression of the eye! what a smile! the look, the demeanor, how subdued! It is impossible to exaggerate here. A Correggio, pure and spiritual as were his conceptions, could never have painted a face of the Virgin mother that would perhaps equal the *ideal* already formed in the mind of every beholder. And, sacred as the theme is, it would seem as if we may be permitted to form and to express, either with pencil or pen, our conception of the countenance and form of one so dear to God and so highly blessed among women. 'Twas through woman sin entered our world, with its long catalogue of woes; through woman the breach was to be effectually repaired and the tide of evil stayed.

We may not linger in the inn, the stable, where the Virgin Mary, and Joseph her husband, are to spend the

* The following description of an Eastern inn or khan will give the reader a tolerably correct idea of the birthplace of the world's Redeemer. It is taken from "*Buckingham's Travels in Mesopotamia*." "The khan consisted of an open court, which was at least a hundred feet square, and was paved throughout. On two of its sides were doors of outlet into covered bazaars; on the third side was a range of stables and cloaca;* and all around on the ground-floor the intervals were filled up by small rooms. Flights of steps led to an upper story, with a veranda, or open gallery, all round, and chambers. Through the court below ran a fine broad stream of transparent water, crossing it diagonally from corner to corner." All these rooms or dormitories, both above and below, were occupied; and Joseph and Mary occupied a room in the stable part of the building.

* Sewer.

night. Stable though it be, the atmosphere is redolent with heaven; and could mortal vision look behind the thin veil, there would be seen convoys of angels ready to bear the tidings of the birth of the world's Redeemer to the skies. Would not also the sound of minstrelsy be heard, the harping of angels,—angels tuning their harps to strike a louder note than was struck on that glad day when the world's fair fabric first rose to their admiring view? But we leave a spot so sacred, and turn elsewhere.

God has communicated himself in many ways to man, and especially to his ancient people:—once to Moses, from the midst of a burning bush,—to the Israelites in the wilderness, in a moving cloud, a cloud which was illuminated at night,—to Samuel, at night, by an audible voice,—to Solomon, in a dream,—and now, “in these last [latter] days,” twice, by an angel. In the Temple, God had spoken to Zacharias, through the medium of Gabriel; in her parents' house the same divine messenger had appeared and spoken to the Virgin Mary. God is now about to make a new manifestation through the ministry of angels. As certain pious shepherds,* on the evening of the day to which we have above referred, were conversing in the door of their tent, and keeping watch at the same time over their flocks, the sky began to brighten, and soon a flood of radiance from on high encircled them and spread its glory over the heavens. Amid the daz-

* The reader is referred, for the antecedents of these witnesses to the birth of Jesus, to Book V. p. 111, of this work, under the chapter headed “*Shepherd Life in Judea*.” Here he will find how they were by a course of discipline and study of the Scriptures taught faith in God, and so prepared for a simple, childlike reception of God's message to them.

zling brightness an angel appeared; and from his lips they learned the birth of "the Lord," who "shall be king over all the earth,"* whose "name is one,"† who is "the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords." They were directed to Bethlehem, where they would find, "lying in a manger, and wrapped in swaddling clothes," Israel's King, the long-expected Messiah, David's infant son, in the city of David.

What came next? What unnumbered hosts are these, this retinue of the sky, filling, in all its amplitude, the starry empyrean? "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place."‡ They have ranged themselves along the sky. What a choir is this! They extend themselves in a circle as far as the eye can reach; crowding myriads fill up the intervening space. With their voices they praise the Lord and make the heavenly arches ring. Did the stars pay obeisance? Did they glisten with a more than pearly brightness? "Why leap ye, ye high hills? this is the hill which God desireth to dwell in; yea, the Lord will dwell in it forever."§ What a burst of melody filled earth and skies and fell on the rapt ears of the wondering, adoring shepherds! O'er hill and plain the melody rang,—o'er Zion's hill, o'er Bethlehem's plain,—this the choral song that ushered in the first-born of Zion's virgin daughter:—

"GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST; AND ON EARTH PEACE, GOOD WILL TOWARD MEN."||

And now the shepherds, hastening to Bethlehem, found

* Zech. xiv. 9.

† Ibid.

‡ Ps. lxxviii. 17.

§ Ps. lxxviii. 16.

|| Luke ii. 14.

all as the angels had said. There was the babe, wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger, (he that was born to universal empire,) and there were Joseph and Mary. The shepherds recounted to them what they had seen, who had spoken to them, why they came there at that unwonted hour, and then departed to make known to all they met what things they had heard and seen, glorifying and praising God for his goodness to the children of men.

CHAPTER VII.

THE VISIT OF THE MAGI.*

THUS far, what has been related in regard to the birth of Christ has been confined, for the most part, to a narrow circle. What is now about to take place will make it matter of public notoriety, bringing it to the knowledge

* The reader will recollect that before the visit of the Magi took place, Mary had presented herself at the Temple with her burnt-offering and sin-offering, and had been purified by the priest. On the eighth day the holy child was circumcised: thirty-three days passed after this, during which time the law regarded Mary as unclean: then she went up to Jerusalem with her offering, was pronounced clean by the priest, and returned to Bethlehem. Here she was occupying other apartments in the inn, or, more probably, living in some private house, when the Magi came with their gifts. It was during her visit with the child to Jerusalem that Simeon and Anna bore their testimony to him as the Anointed Prince. See Book VIII. p. 220, and Book IX. p. 245 of this work, headed respectively "Anna again," and "Simeon."

of Herod and deeply agitating the whole city of Jerusalem.

Two years before the great and wonderful event detailed in the preceding chapter, a new star had suddenly* made its appearance in Persia *proper*, (the *Persis* of the ancients,†) and had attracted general attention. The Magi especially, who were both astronomers and philosophers, surveyed it with the most lively interest. Whether it had any thing peculiar in its form, we cannot say: probably it had not. But it was a NEW STAR, and, without doubt, of a large size and of amazing brightness.‡ It took its station, in all likelihood, far nearer our earth than any other of the fixed stars,—perhaps nearer to us than the nearest planet. Its magnitude being very great, and its position not far removed from us in the immensity of space, it was brightly visible to every eye. In that region of the sun, the stars shine with surpassing lustre;§ but this new inhabitant of the sky outshone them all. Many, doubtless, were the eyes which on each returning night were fixed on this diadem of night, this glittering *star-crown*, and numerous the speculations to which its appearance gave birth.

There was at this time in Persia a sacred city of the

* A star appeared in 1572 so suddenly that Tycho Brahe, the Danish astronomer, “in returning from his laboratory to his dwelling-house, found a group of country-people gazing at it, and was satisfied it had not been in that quarter of the sky half an hour before.”

† Malte-Brun’s Geography.

‡ In 1630, a large star, never before observed, appeared at the time of the birth of Charles II. in the daytime,—“as if to mark something extraordinary in the fortunes of the child that day ushered into existence.”

§ It is said that in Persia one can read by the light of the stars.—Malte-Brun’s Geography.

Magi, by name *Pasargardæ*, not far from where the royal capital of the country, Persepolis, stood, ere Alexander the Great, at the instigation of Lais, a courtesan, set fire to it, destroying one of the most splendid cities of antiquity. Here, probably, dwelt the Magi, of whom we are about to speak. Enlightened by the Zendavesta, familiar with the prophecies of Daniel,—especially with his famous prophecy of the Seventy weeks,—acquainted with the general scope of the Jewish prophetic writings, sharing the earnest expectation that prevailed at that time through all the East of the birth of a most extraordinary personage, their hearts were in a state of readiness to note any unusual manifestation of the power of God. The same divine influence that had wrought in the hearts of Simeon, Anna, and the shepherds had been at work in their hearts. God meant to raise up witnesses, and to produce testimony to his birth, his incarnation in the flesh, not only among his own people, but among those who were not called by his name. But without a divine revelation, without an express communication from heaven, they could not have known that this star heralded the nativity. This God gave them,—though not so soon as the star appeared. Some time must have elapsed after its appearance when—probably in a dream*—God informed them that it ushered in the birth of the Messiah, the “King of the Jews.” They were also directed to visit the child whose star this

* If God appeared, as we know he did, to the Magi in a dream the very night perhaps of their arrival in Bethlehem, and after they had seen the child, directing them not to return to Herod, it is reasonable to infer that he adopted the same mode of communication in showing them that the star prefigured the birth of Christ. Not by unassisted reason, but by divine revelation, did they arrive at the knowledge of this fact.

was, and to take with them gifts as an offering to the new-born Prince of Peace.

We will not trace in detail their long journey, pleasing as this task would be to us. They were about to leave perhaps the richest vales, the loveliest land, upon which the sun shines,—

—————“the land of the cedar and vine,
Where the flowers ever blossom, the beams ever shine;
Where the light wings of Zephyr, oppress'd with perfume,
Wax faint o'er the gardens of Gul in her bloom;
Where the citron and olive are fairest of fruit,
And the voice of the nightingale never is mute;
Where the tints of the earth, and the hues of the sky,
In color though varied, in beauty may vie,
And the purple of ocean is deepest in dye.”*

They were about to leave this fair land—

“’Tis the clime of the East; ’tis the land of the sun”—

far behind, to ford rivers, to cross sandy plains, wide trackless wastes, to incur no small hazard from the wild Koord of the mountains, to be exposed to the scorching sun and deadly blast of the desert, to suffer weariness and thirst, in order to pay homage to earth's new King,—the babe of Bethlehem. Leaving their own more elevated region, their clear, unclouded sky, their ever-blooming flowers, their climate that knows not the extreme either of cold or heat, the song of their birds, they descended toward the lowlands that border on—as it is called—the swift-flowing Tigris. Following the line of this ancient stream, (taking the same course as the ten thousand Greeks on their famous retreat under Xenophon,) they leave on the left the ruins of Babylon, they cross the battle-field first of the younger Cyrus,

* The Bride of Abydos.

and then that where the battle was fought between Alexander the Great and Darius which decided the fate of the Persian empire. Pursuing their route northward, they reach the site of Nineveh: here they cross the river,—most probably then, as now, on a bridge of boats,—entering at this point upon the burning plains of Mesopotamia. Now the Euphrates is passed; and not very long after they reach the city of Damascus.* Crossing the Anti-Libanus, they enter Judea from the north.

Taking it for granted, as we suppose, that the King of the Jews would be born in Jerusalem, (God not revealing all to them at first, leaving part for a new manifestation of his glory and power,) they direct their steps to that city. Their surprise must have been great when, upon inquiry, they could obtain no information of the child. But the occurrence was too remarkable not to produce the greatest sensation. The whole city was quickly in a ferment; men's minds were violently agitated; and at last the strange and exciting intelligence reached the ears of Herod.

Our readers know the condition of Herod at this time. His eldest son, Antipater, was in prison, under sentence of death, for conspiring against the life of his father with a view to his succession to the kingdom. Herod himself was in the greatest distress both of mind and body; for the sickness of which he died in about a year from this time had now seized him,—though the worst symptoms were not as yet developed. His distress also at the discovery of his son's wickedness and un-

* They may have crossed, taking a more direct route, at a lower point, the Great Syrian Desert. The boundary-line between the Syrian and Arabian Deserts is not well defined.

thankfulness was of the most poignant description; while he had neither the will nor the power to look to the God whose law, especially during the latter years of his reign, he had so wilfully trampled under foot, preferring the honor which cometh from man to that which cometh from God. At this juncture fell upon his startled ear the news current in the city. His determination was quickly formed; and he proceeded to "take counsel against the Lord, and against his Anointed,"* to devise the surest method to destroy this new aspirant to his throne. "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have him in derision."† He first called together the Sanhedrin, the great Jewish Council or Senate, consisting "of all the chief priests and scribes," and inquired of them "where Christ should be born."‡ They replied, quoting the words of Micah the prophet, "In Bethlehem of Judea." It appears clearly from this that Herod knew against whom he was fighting,—that he was lifting his puny arm against the long-time-promised King and Great Deliverer of Israel. It was therefore for him, a Jew, and taught, like his great-grandson Agrippa, to "believe the prophets,"§ one of the most impious of acts. As in the case of Saul, it shows that he was indeed forsaken of God and left to his own ways. He next had a private conference with the Magi, inquired of them what time the star appeared,—desiring by this to know the present age of the child; for he supposed the child was born when first the star appeared. Afterward

* Ps. ii. 2.

† Ps. ii. 4.

‡ Matt. ii. 4.

§ Acts xxvi. 27. Paul thus speaks:—"King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest."

he dismissed them, charging them to return to him when they had found the child, that he might "come and worship him also." This was the most refined hypocrisy on the part of Herod; and it would seem as if he was so blinded that he thought he could deceive not only man but God.

Hardly had the Magi passed out of the gates of the city, with their camels and attendants, on their way to Bethlehem, when the star "which they saw in the East" appeared again to their admiring view, and, acting as a guide, like the pillar of fire in the wilderness, conducted them, without delay or difficulty, to the child. What must have been their joy to have had such a guide and to witness so signal a demonstration of the faithfulness of God! God is to us just what we desire him to be. Faith presents and appropriates God to the soul in every form, as Father, Friend, Creator. Not one form alone does God take to his children,—not one fixed character does he sustain, like that of Olympian Jove, who never appears in any other than the guise in which he is arrayed by the poets and sculptors, that of imperial Jupiter; but in every varied form the one true and living God appears to the soul that loves and trusts in him. If at times he clothes himself with light as with a garment, and we view him as that Great Being who made, pervades, and upholds all things,—if he appear to us as that "Great First Cause" who

"Warms in the sun, refreshes in the breeze,
Glow in the stars, and blossoms in the trees,
Lives through all life, extends through all extent,
Spreads undivided, operates unspent,"

oftener does he come to the soul, replenished with his grace and basking under his smile, as its Saviour, Redeemer, Brother, Friend. So in this case. The Magi saw and felt the love of God in this tender and more endearing form in the unexpected appearance of the star. They had left it far behind them, as they thought, shining on their native land, not dreaming of its reappearance, when, lo! suddenly, as it had appeared at first, they beheld it again. Many an eye that night saw that luminous body; but none but the Magi knew its destination. Onward it moved, until it stood directly "over where the young child was." Thus, changing its station from the distant East to Judea's shaded hills and brooks and vales, it became

"Brightest in night's diadem,
The star, the star of Bethlehem."*

Entering, they saw the child, and paid him homage, not as God, (they did not yet understand that Psalm, "And let all the angels of God worship him,"†) but as the anointed Prince of Israel. Warned of God in a dream, they did not return to Herod, but "departed into their own country another way." Admonished of the danger that threatened the child, Joseph fled with him and his mother into Egypt.

When Herod found, after waiting a considerable length of time, that the Magi did not return, and that his scheme to destroy the child was rendered abortive, he flew into the most violent rage; and, hoping yet to effect his object, (as if unconscious

* Kirke White.

† Ps. xcvi. 7.

that he was contending with God: so completely does sin blind the minds of those that believe not,) he sent forth an order to slay all the children, irrespective of sex, in Bethlehem and its vicinity, "from two years old and under." This wholesale butchery of little children and crying infants formed a picture of distress such as was perhaps never before seen. Then was heard in Ramah, "lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not."*

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DEATH OF HEROD.

HEROD lived about a year after this scene of slaughter in Bethlehem. He suffered the most excruciating torture in his last sickness. He was consumed as if by a slow, inward fire, and by an insatiable appetite. "Food!" "food!" was his constant cry. His chief pain was in the grand alimentary canal, which was ulcerated. His breath was so offensive as hardly to be endurable; and the quickness and difficulty with which he breathed were painful in the extreme not only to himself, but to all present. He suffered also violent bodily convulsions. Other parts of the body were affected; and, as in

* Matt. ii. 18.

the case of Sylla, worms and lice were generated, which, removed and washed as often as you would, still remained: "the part taken away was nothing to that which remained." He was a loathsome spectacle. Five days before he died, receiving letters from Augustus, he ordered Antipater to be slain, made his will anew, disposed of his kingdom to three of his sons, subject to the ratification of Augustus, and left munificent bequests. He died, "in the seventieth year of his age," after a reign of thirty-seven years from the time he was made king in the Capitol at Rome.

CHAPTER IX.

THE HOLY FAMILY IN EGYPT.

It is not necessary to shroud in mystery the sojourn of the Holy Child in Egypt. The flight of Joseph was not known; the place of refuge in Egypt was a secret in their own bosoms. It is highly probable that they took up their temporary abode in Egypt somewhere in the vicinity of the ancient city of Memphis, within sight of the pyramids, that threw their long and dark shadows across the sand of the desert. Here one or two—most likely two—years were spent; for so much time had elapsed from the flight into Egypt before Archelaus was confirmed in his kingdom by Augustus. Here, under the waving trees that border the Nile, and

on the green fields that extend along its banks, two years of the infancy of Jesus glided away, when, warned of God in a dream, they set out on their return to the land of Judea,—Egypt, more than once the home of God's chosen ones, having been constituted a sweet and secure asylum for the LORD'S ANOINTED. The gifts of the Magi, brought in faith from the distant East, their gold, their frankincense and myrrh, served as a store in time of need; every necessary want was thus supplied during this unexpected sojourn in a strange land, and means furnished for their return. Thus in a higher sense than in the original application of the words did God call his "Son out of Egypt."*

* Hosea xi. 1.

THE END.





THE
LIFE AND TIMES
OF
HEROD THE GREAT,
AS CONNECTED,
HISTORICALLY AND PROPHETICALLY,
WITH
The Coming of Christ.
AND
INCIDENTAL PORTRAITURES OF NOTED PERSONAGES OF
THE AGE.
BY
WILLIAM M. WILLETT.

"How delightful it is to see, with the eye of faith, Darius, Cyrus, Alexander, the Romans, Pompey, and Herod, laboring unwittingly for the glory of the Gospel!"
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